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BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No. 3

THE DIAMOND TATTOO
or Dick Hardys Fight
for a Fortune.



BY

M. BOYINGTON

With a spring, Dick reached the rail. The next moment he had leaped sheer overboard.

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NEW YORK, January 10, 1903.

Price Five Cents.

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OR,

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CHAPTER I.

THE NIGHT OWLS.

"Help!"

"What's that, boys?"

"I didn't hear anything."

"We ain't all here!"

"Count noses and see!"

"All right! One—two—three—four—five—there ought to be six of us, and there ain't. No, Dudley Ralston is missing."

"Help!"

"There it is again! Come, boys, Dudley must be in trouble."

"Hey, Dud!"

"I'm in the chimney—help me out!"

The five boys, who stood just outside a rude shanty at the edge of a lovely country village, soon disappeared from the twilight-haunted landscape, and their excited voices could be heard inside the hut.

Finally they emerged again, and ejaculations and comments indicated that they were engaged in discussing some exciting episode of the hour.

"Hurt, Dudley?" asked one of the crowd of the new boy in their ranks.

"No, only scratched and grimed badly; see here, it's no fun, the trick some of you played on me!"

"What trick?" queried a guilty voice.

"Yelling out that Scroggins was coming! I was just filling my pockets with the choicest cigars, when some one hollered."

"Why didn't you run outside, then?"

"Couldn't. Mistook a boy for Scroggins himself, and ran for a cupboard. It was locked. Then I made for the chimney, got halfway up it, and stuck there. It's a shame! I've entirely spoiled my clothes!"

"Well, I got the cigars," remarked one of the throng.

"A whole box of them?"

"Three boxes," and Harold Warrington held up a compact parcel. "Let us get away from here, boys. If we were seen it might get us into trouble."

"No danger," replied Dudley, confidently. "I saw old Scroggins in town an hour ago, very busy at the tavern reducing the surplus at the bar, and you can count on him not being home for a long time yet. Come, boys, a smoke. Then for the party."

"And Dick Hardy!" cried another voice.

"Yes, boys, Dick Hardy. Are we together on the plot?"

"You bet we are!"

"Night Owls to the core?"

"Every one of us."

"Good! Then we'll settle his hash. No backing out or treachery; we owe him a grudge, and to-night we'll pay it. Nothing's too bad for a Night Owl to do, to resent an insult to a fellow-member."

"That's it, Dud. Here, take a cigar around, and pocket a few. We'll hide the rest," said Harold.

"I'll take care of the rest, if there's any rest left to take care of," remarked Dudley.

Soon, from a log, a short distance from the highway, six glowing knobs of light illumined the scene, and the heavy air held a canopy of tobacco smoke over the heads of the chattering sextet.

Dudley was the son of the Honorable Jehu Ralston, a millionaire, who by some ludicrous trick of fate had been sent to Congress from his district.

Dudley had considerable money to spend, and during his father's absence at Washington, having no mother, he ran wild. He was a favorite with a certain clique of boys like himself, and lorded it over all juvenile Brighton.

When the society called the Night Owls was started, Dudley usurped full power as president, treasurer, and electing committee, all in one, and made the organization boastfully exclusive.

Its principal aim was to learn to smoke and commit acts of mischief, and so bold and flagrant were its operations, that it now comprised only six members, and they the fastest boys in Brighton, parents generally warning their sons to steer clear of the society.

Just now the Night Owls had two objects of animosity and spite to deal with, and the early evening had been devoted to taking care of one of them.

Silas Scroggins, a cross-grained cigar and tobacco vender, who lived in the miserable shanty nearby, had whipped one of the Night Owls the day previous for stealing a handful of cigars from the little wagon in which he peddled his wares.

Revenge, deep and effective, was at once meditated on the part of the boy's companions, and a visit to Scroggins' home had resulted as has been seen.

They had scattered all Scroggins' lose stock about the floor, taken three boxes of cigars, and were now enjoying their flavor and discussing new vengeance on a second hated object of their spite and dislike.

"We'll settle the fate of Mr. Dick Hardy to-night, boys," remarked the august president of the Ancient Order of Night Owls. "I wouldn't leave Brighton without getting even with him for a thousand dollars. You help me, and I'll make you all a handsome present, as soon as the governor togs me out for my European tour. But it's Dick Hardy first. I fairly hate that fellow."

"Haw! haw! good reason," remarked Dave Little.

"Yes, good reason," replied Dudley, flushing slightly. "He comes here a nobody and treads on my toes the first thing. Who is he, anyway? A beggarly pauper from nowhere, who earns a pittance grubbing for Stokes, the storekeeper. A miserable counter-jumper, who peached on us for carrying away Stokes' signs and got us into trouble. He don't want any fun himself, nor will he let others have any."

"And besides, he licked you," interrupted Dave, maliciously.

"Yes, he did!" he cried, angrily, dashing his cigar to the ground. "What's the use of hiding the truth? He did lick me, and he did sneak into good society and cut a dash ahead of me and made my cake dough with pretty Alice Marshall—drat him. I tell you, boys, I liked her and she liked me until he came along with his pert ways and lies about us all. You needn't grin. At the parties he just takes the pick of all your girls, too."

"Well, he won't to-night!" muttered Dave, ominously.

There was a hurried colloquy, in which excited discussion was apparent.

Then each boy crammed a dozen or more cigars into his pocket, and the group disbanded, Dudley Ralston and Dave Little dragging behind and talking earnestly to one another in confidential tones.

They were quite alone as they reached the village, and near a pleasant cottage they paused.

Dave had two boxes of the stolen cigars still left intact.

"What am I going to do with these, Dud?" he asked. "I don't want to be seen with them."

"Hide them."

"Where?"

"Anywhere. Hello! look there!"

Dudley pointed to the cottage. It was the home of Mr. Stokes, the storekeeper, and his young clerk, Dick Hardy, boarded there.

One of the bedroom windows was open, and a light showed in the apartment beyond.

It revealed a bright-faced, handsome boy, about Dudley's own age, just putting the finishing touches to a careful toilet, by attaching a small bouquet to his coat.

The sight of his rival seemed to transfix Dudley Ralston.

"Come on," said Dave, impatiently.

"There goes Dick."

Dick was just leaving the house.

"The cigars."

"Well?"

"Drop them through the open window of his room yonder, and leave the rest to me," replied Dudley Ralston, with a malicious look in his eyes.

CHAPTER II.

A DARK PLOT.

Dudley Ralston's distorted mind adjudged his rival to be a sneak, an interloper, and a malicious meddler, but not so the majority of youths and adults in Brighton.

True, Dick Hardy was a newcomer. No one knew what his past had been. He might have come from a reform school, for all they knew.

But within a month after his advent at Brighton, Dick Hardy began to attract attention.

He was unobtrusive, courteous and accommodating, and soon won his way into the esteem of all with whom he came in contact, except the Night Owl's crowd.

From the start they set in to "down him!" as they expressed it.

Dick's "stuck up ways" irritated them. He detected them in carrying away the store signs, and beat them off. From that time his interference in their mischief made him a prominent target for their malice.

Dick made the acquaintance of the daughter of the second wealthiest gentlemen in Brighton—Alice Marshall. Her father was a judge, and was quite as refined and intelligent as was the Honorable Jehu Ralston coarse and ignorant.

One day the pony-phaeton that pretty Alice drove, ran away. Dick happened to be passing along the street at the time; the vehicle was dashing from side to side, and rapidly nearing the river, while the frightened Alice sat in terror, holding on to the seat.

She had lost a companion since the horse had started on its wild career—Dudley Ralston. He had been driving her to the post office when he had lost control of the lines, and then, coward that he was, observing his own peril, he sprang from the vehicle and abandoned his helpless companion to her fate.

Dick Hardy had a hard run of it to catch up with the horse, for it was fully half a square in advance of him when he first discovered Alice's dilemma.

Even when he had caught at the reins and tried to check the steed's mad progress, he was dragged under its feet.

The injury laid him up for two days; but during that time he was the hero of the village, and anxious Alice called each day with a bouquet; and even the judge, her father, condescended to visit the invalid and thank him fervently for his bravery and service in behalf of his daughter.

Previous to this Alice's escort on most all occasions had been Dudley Ralston, but she gave him a decidedly cold shoulder after that.

Thus Dudley grew to cordially hate his new rival, and one day met him with a crowd of Night Owls, and tried to engage him in a quarrel. He met his match in Dick and was badly beaten.

Upon the night on which Dudley had planned to injure Dick, Miss Alice Marshall had issued invitations for a party at her palatial home, and all juvenile Brighton was agog over the event.

It was in the nature of a farewell to her young friends, for within a week Judge Marshall and his daughter were to go to New York, and sail thence to Europe.

The judge's sister was to accompany Alice, and a family named Wardell was to go as far as Liverpool.

Dudley Ralston was also to be one of the party. That this did not suit Alice, she plainly showed by her manner, but Mr. Ralston had written from Washington, asking the judge to see Dudley safe in the hands of relatives who lived in London, and out of friendship for a neighbor, the judge had agreed to the arrangement.

It was just eight o'clock that evening when Dick, after a business call in the village, turned his footsteps toward the great stone mansion on the hill, already aglow with brilliant lights.

Just as he passed the edge of the town hall square, a boisterous

voice hailed him, suspiciously near, as if its owner had been purposely waiting for him.

"Hello, Dick!"

Dick smiled, and returned the salutation, but did not pause in his walk as he recognized the speaker.

It proved to be Dale Vincent, and Dale, as Dick well knew, was one of the Night Owls, and a warm adherent of Dudley Ralston.

"Hold on, Dick," spoke Dale; "what's the hurry?"

"What's the use of delay?"

"Nothing, nothing, only I suppose you're going to the party?"

"Yes"

"Hold on, Dick."

They were just passing a drugstore, the last business store in the block, and Dale halted abruptly.

"What's the matter, Dale?" asked Dick, bound to be pleasant with an invited guest to the Marshall home, suspicious as he was of the entire sincerity of Dale's friendly overtures.

"I'm thirsty."

"Going in to get a drink?"

"Yes."

"All right; I'll wait for you."

"No, come in with me; I'm going to get some soda water."

"I don't care for any, Dale."

"Oh, come now, Dick! don't be unfriendly—come along please."

Dick followed Dale, at his pleadings. A red-haired, freckle-faced boy stood behind the counter.

He grinned vacantly at Dick, and watched Dale's face craftily.

The latter winked slyly. The young clerk was a cousin of his, and that very day Dale had promised to try and get him elected as a member of the Night Owls, if he would help him in a little scheme to "doctor" Dick Hardy.

Sizz-zz-zz-z!

A hissing serpent lurked in the innocent-looking liquid, but Dick never suspected it, and drained the glass that the clerk proffered him

"Whew! it's strong—tastes like alcohol!" he gasped.

"New Magenta-cream flavor," grinned the clerk.

Dick's throat burned and his whole frame seemed glowing with intense warmth as they came out again upon the street.

He chatted carelessly with Dale all the way to the Marshall mansion, and was somewhat surprised at the exaggerated anticipation of pleasure he experienced as they neared the scene of the party.

The drawing-rooms were already filled with a gay company, and in the excitement of being ushered there, and the greeting of the pretty hostess, and her friends, Dick forgot all about his strange exhilaration.

His head had become slightly dizzy and a filmy vapor seemed to cloud his clear vision, but he attributed all this to the heat of the rooms, and the embarrassment on being for a moment the cynosure of the company present as the latest arrived guest.

"Oh, Dick! please help me entertain the company until the

games begin, will you?" asked Nellie May, a cousin of Alice Marshall, as the latter left Dick to receive some new arrivals.

"If I can," replied Dick. "What can I do?"

"The conjuring tricks, Dick, and the imitations. They are so clever!"

Dick had mastered several unique feats at legerdemain.

"I'm afraid they will think I am monopolizing attention," said Dick.

"Oh, not at all! please, Dick!"

"Please, Mr. Hardy!"

"Oh! do oblige us."

A half-dozen charming girls, who had overheard the request of Nellie, joined their entreaties to hers, and Dick smilingly agreed to favor them.

Smilingly! Somehow, as he arose from the chair where he was seated, he was conscious that he could not keep an inane and expressionless smile off his face.

Then, too, he slightly stumbled as he placed the chair to hide his hands, while he prepared to make a silver dollar disappear in plain sight of his little audience.

His fingers had never seemed so clumsy, and he bungled terribly in the execution of the trick, but a clever flip of the coin into the air, where it seemed to melt away, atoned for it all, and so delighted the audience that they applauded loudly, attracting the other guests curiously to the spot.

From the rear ranks of the group two pairs of eyes watched the maneuvers of Dick with expectant glances.

"Say, Dave! have you seen Dale Vincent?" asked Dudley Ralston in a low tone of voice.

"Yes."

"Did he meet Dick?"

"Met him and treated him."

"The soda water?"

"Yes."

"Capital! Look at Dick; his eyes are getting dull and his face flushed."

"Just wait! he's got a dose that will fix him soon."

Alice Marshall came up at that moment; she glanced pleasantly at Dudley and Dave, but in a mechanical way, her attentive smile being directed to Dick.

It faded from her face a moment later and grew to an alarmed stare.

Dick Hardy was acting queerly. He felt it himself, but could not account for it; he experienced a dizzy sensation, his face was burning like fire, his eyes seemed covered with a haze, his speech difficult, and yet amid it all he felt strangely excited and exhilarated, indeed, like laughing all the time.

"Oh, Dick! the handkerchief trick," cried Nellie.

Dick groped in his pocket rather clumsily; the next moment he brought out a handkerchief, but with it, unexpectedly, two other objects.

A pack of greasy cards fell to the floor in all directions, half a dozen cigars followed them. Dick Hardy, holding on to the chair,

and staring beyond and not at the company, never noticed what had occurred.

Alice Marshall's face flushed painfully; then she made her way through the throng and nearer to Dick.

He was trying to twirl the handkerchief into a trick-knot, and each moment the vapid smile on his face grew more unmeaning, and he had begun to sway slightly from side to side.

"Gentlemen and ladies, this very difficult trick—this very difficult gentlemen—gentlemen and difficult trick——"

Dick tried to speak coherently, to stand erect, to comprehend the sudden paralysis of mental faculties that was chaining his senses.

"Oh, Dick!"

With a gasp of dismay and affright, Alice Marshall drew back as she got near enough to Dick to catch the dead taint of liquor on his breath. Just then Judge Marshall entered the room, and came forward with a genial smile to the now serious and wondering throng.

"Gentlemen and ladies——"

Dick got that far. Then a flash of blinding light dazzled his vision, utter blackness ensued, and then reeling where he stood he fell against a costly marble shaft that held a beautiful crystal globe.

Globe and pilaster went crashing to the floor, and Dick among its ruins.

"My child!" uttered the judge, in deep amazement, as Alice hastened toward him.

"Oh, papa, take Dick away, he has been drinking!" gasped Alice, as she clung tremblingly to Judge Marshall's arm.

There was a hush like death over the brilliantly lighted room as Judge Marshall led the staggering Dick from the place.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

From the moment that Dick Hardy had upset the marble shaft and globe, and fell among the *débris*, and was led by the stern-faced Judge Marshall from the room, he knew absolutely nothing of what he did, until he found himself three hours later, lying on the grass in an unfamiliar spot, soaked through with the rain which was pouring down upon his unsheltered form in a perfect torrent.

The judge had led him into the hall and thence to the front veranda. Here Dick had sunk to a step, limp and helpless, his head falling on his breast.

"I can hardly believe my eyes," gasped the astonished judge. "It seems incredible, and yet there is the taint of liquor on his breath. Is the boy a hypocrite or has he given way to temptation for the first time?"

Judge Marshall forgot his natural indignation in sincere distress as he realized how Dick Hardy had risked his life to save Alice, and his past upright career.

"I do not feel like taking him home in that condition," mused the judge. "Dick—Dick Hardy!"

But he could not arouse Dick. The latter remained in a deep stupor.

Judge Marshall took him up bodily at last, and carried him away from the veranda, and the sight of the curious eyes that peered out at him from the open front windows, and bore him to a summer-house in the garden at the side of the mansion.

Here he laid him on a bench, watched him for some moments, and then slowly retraced his way to the house.

That was a sad evening for Alice Marshall, although she bravely sought to hide her true feelings. Her faith in Dick Hardy had been rudely shattered, and the shock had made pleasure a mockery.

"Is it true, papa?" she murmured, when she again saw her father; "has he been drinking?"

"I fear so, my child," replied Judge Marshall, gently. "You must conceal your feelings, for the sake of your guests. I shall keep Dick here until he recovers, and explains it all."

About ten o'clock it began to rain. Within the house all was gayety, for all, except Alice, had forgotten the unpleasant incident of the earlier evening.

Dudley Ralston and his cohorts were in high spirits. They had defeated a hated foe, and Dudley had the pleasure of escorting Alice to supper.

Judge Marshall stood aghast, as reaching the summer-house where he had left Dick, he found him gone.

He intended to take him into the house out of the rain, but Dick had disappeared.

The latter had awakened, and reeled from the spot a few minutes previously, but with no rational purpose in view.

The treacherous ally of Dudley Ralston had faithfully executed his share of the plot to "down" Dick Hardy.

It was Dale Vincent who had placed the pack of cards and cigars in Dick's pocket, and had arranged with his cousin, the clerk at the drugstore, to dose the glass of soda water.

The latter had prepared a strong decoction of alcohol and laudanum, and the speedy results satisfied the most sanguine expectations of Dick Hardy's enemies.

In a daze, his mind a blank, reeling to and fro, Dick staggered on away from the Marshall mansion, and for over a mile along a lonely road that ran from the village.

Then at a high embankment he fell, and lay in sodden sleep at its bottom, never heeding the rain that drenched him to the skin.

Now, for a second time, he had revived, but cloudiness of vision, erratic control of his feet, a dull, throbbing confusion allowed but one thought—to find shelter from the storm.

He wandered on a few steps, and came to where a dark object loomed up in the mistiness and gloom.

It resembled a cabin with an open door. It was really an empty freight car on the railroad, but the drugged Dick did not know it then.

Dick managed to clamber into the open doorway, and then fell prone on the floor in a corner of the car.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EVENTFUL RIDE.

It was twelve hours after entering the empty freight car when Dick Hardy awoke.

Daylight came in at the end window of the car, the side doors being closed, and for some moments he could not imagine where he was.

There was a dull pain in his head, his eyes seemed swollen and full of sand. Every bone was racked with a nervous, grinding stiffness, and his brain could not grasp and retain a single coherent idea.

"Where am I—what has happened?"

Dick lay still after an ineffectual effort to arise, and waited for the mists of confusion to clear from his mind.

Gradually light came, step by step he went back over the events of the past night.

The first suspicion that occurred to him was a recollection of the strange flavor of the soda water.

Yes, Dale Vincent was a friend of Dudley Ralston, and the latter had plotted to disgrace him, and had succeeded.

Dick remembered his strange sense of exhilaration in the parlors at the Marshall mansion. He must have become more and more confused, been taken away, and by some mechanical progress had reached the freight car and had gone to sleep there.

But the shame, the disgrace, the uncertainty of his actions at the mansion! These thoughts fairly tortured Dick Hardy for a moment. Then indignation and resentment took their place, and he struggled to his feet, and groped his way to the end window.

He could glance out sideways. The train was going at a rapid rate, and through a country entirely unfamiliar to him.

He might be a hundred miles away from Brighton, for all he knew. He had no idea how many hours the car had been in motion.

He did not care, however. He had but one thought—to go no further, to leave the train, return to Brighton, and learn the full extent of his disgrace.

Then he would force the truth from Dale Vincent, and his fair name should be cleared from reproach.

Already, perhaps, his absence would add to the seeming wrong of his position.

Another thing—the night previous, in his walk preceding the party, Dick had collected a bill for groceries due his employer, amounting to thirty dollars.

He felt in his coat pocket as he thought of it. The pocketbook was safe, but what would Mr. Stokes think of his strange absence?

"I must lose no time in returning," decided Dick, resolutely. "Oh, my head! my head!"

Of a sudden all the old pain and sense of confusion returned, and just as he pushed back the grated window, they overcame him and drove him to a seat on the floor again.

"Hello, there!"

A gruff voice called out the words from the other end of the car.

A frouzy form came in view.

Even amid his misery Dick evinced a certain interest in this new incident.

"Woke up?" spoke the stranger, who, dressed like a tramp, was dimly outlined in the vague light that came in through the end window of the car.

"Yes," moaned Dick, almost inarticulately.

"What was ye trying to do?"

"To get out."

"And off?"

"Yes."

"Humph!" ye'd have a nice tumble. What's the matter with ye, anyway?"

"I'm sick."

"Jest ye lie still, bye, and when they stop, ye can get off; see, here's some water and bread, if ye want it."

"Water!" murmured Dick, faintly.

The tramp produced a bottle, and Dick drained a portion of its contents feverishly, but he could not eat the bread.

"I allers pervides for contingents," said the tramp. "Hello! we're coming to a stop."

"Then I must get off," said Dick.

He made an effort to rise, but could not, unaided.

"Help me!" he said.

"No use, lad, ye couldn't get through that window yonder, if I did help ye; it's too narrer. Say, ye wants to get back to Brighton?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Well, then, take the quickest way!"

"What's that?"

"Ride on to New York. It's only twenty miles. There seems to be nothing but freight trains on this line. At New York ye can catch a passenger train, and get back home in a twinkling."

"I fear I'll have to wait!" moaned Dick, miserably.

"I'm going to get off," said the tramp.

"And leave me?"

"Just to buy some more grub."

"I have money," began Dick, faintly.

"No, no!" interrupted the tramp, with undue haste. "I've got plenty of money."

He had—poor Dick discovered why—a little later.

CHAPTER V.

MORE COMPLICATIONS.

The tramp had climbed through the window, but the train started finally, and he did not return as promised.

Dick did not care much; he was too miserable to heed outside affairs, and was only haunted by the terrible plot against him at Brighton.

He recognized it all as Dudley Ralston's work, and each moment the details appalled him more and more.

Suppose that Dale Vincent absolutely denied treating him to soda water, and that the drug clerk, his cousin, to help out his unscrupulous friends, should affirm that Dick ordered and drank liquor.

Suppose the theft of the cigars should, by circumstantial evidence, be plainly and undeniably traced to his charge?

The alleged embezzlement from Mr. Stokes, the grocer, Dick could refute by hastening back to Brighton and returning the money.

He began to feel better now. Two hours had elapsed since the tramp had left. Dick went to the window and took out his pocketbook.

"Empty!"

The discovery shocked him terribly.

"The tramp!"

Yes, he had undoubtedly robbed him. Ah! this was the worst complication of all.

Poor Dick fairly despaired now.

He heard some brakemen talking on the roof of the car overhead. Their conversation attracted his attention.

"We'll be in the city in an hour, Jem?"

"Yes."

"Lay over there, do you?"

"One night."

"I'll wait," decided Dick. "I can find a train for Brighton there any time."

The train at last came to a halt, and he got ready to climb out.

Then the train seemed switched apart, and sections of it sent down various tracks.

The men remained overhead, and finally the car was switched off alone, and the next minute it began to rock.

"Why! it's on a boat!" ejaculated the startled Dick, as he heard a water-wheel work, and saw the gleaming waves of a broad stream.

Dick was not familiar with New York, and did not then know that the car was being taken from Jersey City across the North River to a steamer dock in New York.

Finally it was switched off the boat and on rails on terra firma once more, and Dick climbed out of the window, as the men overhead went away.

He glanced about him curiously, for there were only seven or eight cars in sight, and the great busy city extended beyond the river wharves.

He approached a boy who was lounging on a pier, watching some men load an ocean ship.

"Where is the railroad depot, bub?" asked Dick.

"Which one?"

"Any of them."

"Across in Jersey City."

"Over there?" asked Dick, pointing across the river.

"Yes."

"How do I get back?"

"Ferryboat, two streets south."

"Is it free?"

"Free? no!" replied the boy, forcibly. "It's two cents."

Two cents. Poor Dick, he did not even have one!

He sat down on a pile of lumber to think, his coat wrapped up in a newspaper he had found in the car across his knee.

"Hello!" he ejaculated, suddenly, "I wonder if I couldn't sell the coat for enough to help me on my way back to—— Goodness gracious!"

A marvelous discovery had interrupted Dick's first line of thought.

As he started to fold the package more neatly, his eye chanced to fall upon a line in print on the creased and soiled newspaper.

"Wanted—Information of a boy named Richard Hardy!"

CHAPTER VI.

MORTIMER BLUFF, LAWYER.

"Wanted!"

"I reckon that's all right!"

The speaker was a cunning-faced, weazened boy of about sixteen, and he stood at a desk in a dowdily furnished office in New York City.

On the glass panel in the door the name of the occupant of the place was blazoned forth in staring gilt letters:

"MORTIMER BLUFF,

"Barrister, Attorney, Counselor-at-Law and Notary Public."

The sallow-complexioned youth eyed the first word he had spelled out on a piece of white cardboard with a marking brush, and proceeded to add on a lower line, in the same straggling and irregular letters:

"A BOY."

"Wanted, a boy!" he said, "that will do it. I resign, quit, vamoose! Clever Abner Mull! You've carved your fortune well, and Mortimer Bluff had to take you in as partner. Ha, ha!"

Suddenly the door opened; a tall, ungainly man, with close-buttoned, threadbare coat entered the room.

"Ha! you're down early, Mull?" he said, briskly; "all in order, too! I declare! Any callers, Mull?"

"What callers do we ever have?" growled Mr. Mull, surlily.

"Ha, ha! true, true—the cases that never come. The pretense of business is here, and—— Oho! the sign is out. Got to get a new boy, eh? Now, Mull——"

"Yes, 'Mull!'" interrupted the boy, pertly.

"It's Mull—Mull—Mull—me boy—me boy!" but Mull wants facts. Does the game come off to-day or not?"

"Mull, I am very sorry to say that it does not."

"It don't? Then I'm getting tired of it. Where's the money, and the clothes, and the riotous living that has been promised me? I'm sick of procras—procras——"

"——tinations, exactly," replied the lawyer, blandly. "Ah,

Mull! you make me weep at your impatience! Four days more, dear boy, and then—ho, for Utopia!"

"For where?" demanded the disgruntled Mull, suspiciously.

"Utopia, paradiso, the *dolce far niente* of your youthful ardor. Europe, Irup, Orup, ho! ho! Mull, when I think of the figure you'll cut, it makes me smile."

The figure Martin Mull cut just now was not a very prepossessing one, but he seemed somewhat mollified at his employer's words of promise.

"As to the money, Mull?" continued Bluff, "look here!"

The lawyer drew forth a pocketbook, and threw it on the table.

Mull seized it wolfishly, and tore it open with greedy eyes.

"That's something like," he cried. "How much?"

"Five hundred!"

"Now, then, what's expected of me for this money?"

"First—togs."

"And I'll buy the best, too."

"That's right, heirs do always. Next, passage money."

"Private cabin—eat at captain's table?"

"Exactly—money no object. Mull, I want you to stay around to-day, and attend to callers for your place."

"All right—only I want to go out and leave my measure for a suit. It'll be quick work if I'm to leave on the steamer Saturday."

"You are. Be back soon, my dear Mull."

"I will."

Mull withdrew. The lawyer shook his fist after him.

"The young cub!" he muttered, once alone. "If it wasn't for the money, I'd give him a dose for his insolence. But steady, Barrister Mortimer, steady Bluff, old boy! Five hundred down, and half a fortune ahead, is not to be sniffed at, and Mull's in my power if he tries to cheat me."

Bluff retired to the next room, and in an hour Master Mull came back. He wore an immense paste diamond pin on his scarf now, which he regarded with frequent glances of admiration in the little mirror hanging on the desk.

Then, for over an hour, he was kept busy answering the applications of boys who came in response to the sign below for "boy wanted."

None of them suited Mull, and, besides, he enjoyed tormenting and disappointing the applicants.

Finally a boy entered who neither took off his hat to Mull, nor betrayed the timidity that Mull's scowling manner had invoked with previous callers.

"Well, what do you want?" demanded Mull, insolently.

"I came about an advertisement."

"Well, you won't do."

"Won't do for what?"

"Office boy."

"I don't want to be an office boy."

"Don't?"

"No."

"What are you talking about then?"

"An advertisement."

"Exactly—on the door below—boy wanted."

"Exactly not—in the newspaper—boy wanted."

Abner Mull started as if he had been struck a sudden blow.

He sprang to his feet and fixed his cat-like eyes on the newcomer.

"W-what!" he gasped—"an advertisement?"

"Yes—in the paper."

"What paper?"

"Daily *Herald*—date two months ago."

"Information——"

"——wanted of a boy, signed Mortimer Bluff."

"What's this row?"

Bluff had come to the door of his office, his pen between his teeth.

"No row," gasped Mull; "Mr. Bluff, this—boy—that boy—here—there——"

"Well, well?" cried the lawyer, testily.

"Says he came about an advertisement about a boy—the advertisement."

"What!" ejaculated Bluff. "The?"

"Yes."

"Boy, what's your name?" demanded Bluff, as he fixed a fierce look on the newcomer.

"Richard Hardy."

"Gosh! we're beat!" ejaculated Mull, as he sank to a chair.

"Confusion!" muttered Mortimer Bluff, as the pen fell from his teeth, and he stared in bewildered incredulity at his visitor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIAMOND TATTOO.

"Richard Hardy!" murmured Mull, never taking his glowing eyes off Dick. "That's queer and bad—decidedly bad."

"But it is, sir!" affirmed Dick.

"I advertised everywhere."

"I never knew it until yesterday."

Bluff picked up his pen, gazed contemplatively at Dick, and then walked to a desk.

He wrote a single line on a sheet of paper. Then he said to Dick.

"Come into my private office, sir."

As the lawyer passed Mull, he flung him the paper.

It read:

"If you ever wake up, wake up now—sharp's the word."

The lawyer left the door slightly ajar, and motioned Dick to a seat.

"You say you are Richard Hardy?" remarked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"Can you prove it?"

"Certainly."

"How?"

"Well, at Brighton, where I have been living for several months, everybody knows me as Dick Hardy."

"That is, you told them you were Dick Hardy when you first went there?"

"Yes, sir," replied the wondering Dick.

"Of their own knowledge, you might be Sam Smith, or Joe Jones, or Bob White, or Alexander the Great, eh, boy?"

"But, sir——"

"The law, boy! I don't doubt you. I advertise for a certain Richard Hardy; you appear; I want proofs; I don't want a boy who simply calls himself Richard Hardy; I want *the* Richard Hardy—the one who is about sixteen years old."

"And a certain birthmark."

Dick rolled up his coat-sleeve. On the white skin of the forearm was a dark-blue outline. It seemed to have been pricked in by Indian ink, or some other indelible agent years previous.

It was strange-looking, yet simple. This was it:



Mortimer Bluff gazed at the mark with distended eyes that bore conviction in their depths. Then he took from his desk a package of papers and selected a small piece of yellow-colored parchment. At this he glanced critically, and Dick, catching a glimpse of it, saw that it bore an exact counterpart of the mark on his arm.

"You're the boy that I advertised for," said Bluff, finally. "There's no use denying that."

Mortimer Bluff turned the key in his desk, and walked into the next room, closing the door after him.

Abner Mull sat huddled in a chair, his face working nervously.

"Well, governor, game's up?" he muttered.

"I guess you'll have to hand over that five hundred dollars again, Mull," said the lawyer. "I've got the true heir."

Mull reflected moodily for a moment.

"Say, Bluff?" he remarked, finally. "How much will he pay you?"

"Only lawyer's fees."

"I'll give you three-quarters; take it all, give me what you want—only let me become the heir."

"You'd never betray me?"

"I wouldn't dare."

"Then mind your eye, listen, and act," said Bluff, tragically, a crafty look in his face.

He picked up a large book, as if that was the reason of his leaving Dick, and re-entered the inner office again, leaving the door slightly open.

"Now then, Mr. Hardy," he said, briskly, "we're ready for business."

Dick looked eager.

"You're Richard Hardy; well and good. I'm Mortimer Bluff, lawyer. I'm paid to find you—good! I find you. Who knows that you came here?"

"No one," replied Dick, promptly.

"Capital—hum! I mean, very good," remarked Bluff. "Ever hear of Caspibianica Throttlebury?"

Dick smiled at the singular name.

"Never, sir."

"Well, then, suppose I tell you that about half a year ago I received a letter from Warra-Warra, New Guinea. The writer in some way heard of my eminence as an American barrister, counselor, attorney-at-law, and notary public—a national, I might say, world-wide reputation, mine, sir. He reposes in me a great secret. His correct name is General Roderick Hardy, royal navy of His Majesty King of England, now a king himself—think of that! but he freely and candidly confessed if he had his deserts he would have been hung on the gallows long ago!"

Dick Hardy wondered if the lawyer was relating some wild romance. The face of the attorney was, however, grave as that of a preacher. He appeared to be telling the truth, and Dick was forced to believe him.

"He had disobeyed orders in a fight with Malay pirates," continued Bluff, "years ago. His ship went to pieces on some rocks. The high admiral would have had him shot for his disobedience if he had caught him, but the general was too sharp. He just ships away in a lifeboat, and lands on the desolate coast of New Guinea. Well, he found some friendly savages; he continued to live with them. They made him king, and he wrote me from Warra-Warra, the possessor of millions of dollars in gold and jewels, to find the single distant relative he had in the world, Robert Hardy."

"My father!" murmured Dick, intensely interested.

"Exactly, your father is dead. I get track of you. The birth-mark, or rather the mark put on your arm at birth, is an old family mark that the general, too, bears—all the Hardy's have it. I could not find you. I gave it up. I advertised everywhere for you, but no use. I sent to General Hardy four hundred of the five hundred dollars he sent me, retaining a modest fee for my services. I close the case. Now you appear. Well, that put a new color to the affair. Ha, hum! let me think."

Dick Hardy was intensely startled over this strange story. He had no reason to doubt the lawyer. He knew, from books and papers he had seen in his earlier years, that his father was a descendant of a wealthy English family. He had read in stories of just such strange affairs as that described by the lawyer; still the reckless way in which the latter spoke did not strike him pleasantly.

"Yes," said Bluff, at last, half musingly, "I guess the only way is to act definitely and on my own resources. Have you any money, boy?"

"Not a dollar."

"Nor friends?"

"Yes, I have some friends."

"Where?"

"At Brighton."

"Let them stay there. You must act promptly and decisively. Does a fortune tempt you?"

"Not particularly."

"Then you don't wish to be heir to a kingdom?"

Dick was silent.

"Because if you don't, say so, and go back to your friends. I work for money. I have a client who wants you, but he has in a way given up the hope of finding you. Here you are now. Well, I agree to take the responsibility of sending you to him. But it costs money. Well, I advance it. It must be repaid, however, remember that. Ah! let me see if I can recall the letter he wrote me. My head feels like a mul-berry bush this morning."

As Bluff said mul—Mull himself, in the other room, aroused from a stolid, listening reverie, and bent his ear keenly toward the half-open door.

"I'll get it right," continued Bluff. "Yes, the letter ran as follows."

He was a funny man, Dick decided. It was all like a play to him.

Mul—right ("Mull write!") The words were a signal from the scheming lawyer to his crafty clerk.

Just then, however, Dick Hardy never suspected it.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUEER PROCEEDINGS.

"Caspibianica Throttlebury," repeated Mortimer Bluff, "writes me a letter, and it is dated Warra-Warra, New Guinea."

"Yes, sir, you said so before," murmured Dick.

"Well, he says, 'My dear Major Bluff'—I was a major once, you see, and he had probably seen the fact mentioned in some history or other. 'My dear Major Bluff, I write you on important business as a representative lawyer of America, on a delicate and vital secret. Inclosed is my history, and a description of the man I wish to find—Robert Hardy. I fear he is dead, but he had a son, Richard, who lived in Boston. Find him. He is my nearest relative now. Once found, send him to me at once.'"

These words Bluff spoke slowly and deliberately; it seemed as if he was dictating them to some one.

In fact, as Dick glanced through the half-open door he discovered Master Abner Mull engaged in listening, writing, listening, writing, just as if he was taking down the words of the lawyer for some purpose or other, and for the first time Dick began to grow suspicious at all these strange occurrences.

"Then the letter went on," resumed Bluff: "'When you find the boy Richard Hardy, tell him as much as you like of my history, and send him at once to me. Find a ship touching at Sydney, and he can thence easily find Warra-Warra. He is to tell no one that he is coming to me. If he does not think enough of his last relative to come, as I direct, tell him to stay, and my wealth shall go to the savages here.'"

"Now that letter was signed General Roderick Hardy. That gives the entire matter in a nutshell. What have you got to say about it?"

Dick did not at once reply. He was just then watching a peculiar pantomime in the next room.

Abner Mull, as the lawyer finished talking, had finished writing. He folded the sheet of paper before him, and seemed to be waiting for something.

All this Dick noticed, unobserved by Bluff or Mull.

"Well, it's a strange story," he said, finally.

"Stranger stories happen, but that's not the question. Do you or do you not go to Warra-Warra?"

Dick was in a quandary. He could not decide so quickly, and he told the lawyer so.

Bluff left the room.

The moment he came into the presence of Mull, the latter sprung to his feet excitedly.

"See here, Bluff," he demanded, "what does this all mean?"

"Fiction, my boy, pure fiction," smiled the crafty lawyer, "necessary in our business, ha, ha! Why, would you have me tell the boy the truth?"

"And you want to send him to Warry-Warry?"

"I intend to get rid of him, yes. Suppose he stays here and I didn't get him out of the country? He knows we advertised for him. He'd tell his friends. They would investigate, learn the truth, and where would you and I be?"

"Kite high."

"Behind bars, in the bargain, too, maybe, Mull! I send him to New Guinea."

"And when he learns that there is no Warry-Warry nor Caspian Throbug, or whatever the name is, what then?"

"He comes back."

"And is more suspicious than ever?"

"Aha! maybe; but it takes time, my boy—a year, maybe more, to go to Guinea and back. By that time our schemes will be perfected. There will be no Mortimer Bluff to question. America will have lost one of its brightest legal luminaries, and New York will mourn a departed Mull; ha, ha; no, Mull, he must be out of the way. Did you write the letter I dictated?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"Here," and Mull handed Bluff the folded sheet of paper.

"Very good," said the lawyer, glancing over it, and a few minutes later he again went into the room where he had left Dick.

"Well, Mr. Hardy, have you decided? Ah! by the way, here is your uncle's letter. I happened to find it in the outside office."

Dick mechanically took the proffered missive.

"Mr. Bluff," he said, seriously. "I have decided to accept your offer."

"And go to New Guinea? Excellent—very wise, sir!" cried Bluff, delightedly.

"Only I must return to Brighton first."

Bluff's face clouded.

"That's bad!" he muttered.

"I will return in a day. I shall tell no one of this affair. What difference can it make?"

Bluff looked disconcerted, but paced the floor silently.

Dick glanced at the letter he had given him.

Word for word, it repeated what Bluff had pretended to recite from memory.

Dick looked puzzled. The letter looked all right, but he made a discovery that startled him.

It was written in a crabbed, miserable hand, was remarkably fresh and new, and—a glance at the lawyer's table verified the further suspicion that came into Dick Hardy's mind at that moment.

He arose to his feet with a shock. A whole flood of revelation had assailed him. He doubted not now but that he was being grossly, purposely deceived, and he intended to learn why.

"Mr. Bluff," he said, fixing his eyes on the lawyer, "I wish to ask you a question."

"Certainly, certainly!" replied Bluff, hastily, somewhat startled at Dick's manner.

"Is this the letter you received from my uncle, as you call him?"

"Yes, Mr. Hardy, that's the letter."

"Sure?"

"Then, how is it that those copied briefs on your table are in the same handwriting, and that this sheet of paper has the same embossed line on the end, 'New York Paper Company,' as that on your blank writing tablet yonder?"

Mortimer Bluff started with a dismayed look, glanced hastily at his table, tore the letter from Dick Hardy's hand, and scowled darkly.

"Drat that boy, Mull!" he muttered, "now we are in a pretty kettle of fish. Ha, hum! Mr. Hardy," he continued aloud, as he regained his composure somewhat, "I see you are a very shrewd boy. As that is just what I have been trying to find out by all this little fiction of mine, I am now going to tell you the real reason why I advertised for you. Sit down, I'll return in a minute, and we'll get down to business at last!"

CHAPTER IX.

A PRISONER.

"Mull, you're a blockhead, and I'm another one!" growled Bluff, as he came again into the outer office.

"What's the row now?" asked Mull, testily.

"The boy's a keen one. He detected the fraud."

"It's desperate measures now. The boy will be more suspicious than ever after this bad break. You know my old friend, Captain Scrooge?"

"Yes, I know him."

"Well, find him at once; give him a letter I shall write; bring him here, and once he is outside you come in and signal me."

Mull looked anxious, and sped away as Bluff hastily wrote some lines on a sheet of paper and handed it to him.

Then the latter re-entered his private office, and smiled placidly at Dick.

Bluff began a long and tedious dissertation on the deftness and caution that a lawyer's peculiar profession made necessary.

He seemed to be simply putting in time until Mull's return, and Dick became suspicious and impatient.

"I came here," continued Dick, seriously, "in reply to an advertisement. For some reason, you persist in deceiving me. Good-day, sir."

"Hold on, hold on!"

"I shall find some other way to learn this strange secret of yours."

"No, no, my dear young friend, listen to me, bear with me a moment!"

Just then the outer door of the office opened and Mull entered.

He directed an intelligent look at his employer. Bluff smiled craftily.

Then a singular change came over him. He affected an air of offended dignity.

"Mr. Hardy," he said, in a severe tone of voice to Dick; "you have seen fit to cast aspersions of fraud upon the character of the leading lawyer in America. I refuse to deal with you; I beg of you to leave this office, sir!"

Dick stared in wonderment at Bluff; he began to think the man demented.

"You refuse to tell me——" he began.

"Everything," interrupted Bluff with a grandiloquent wave of his hand. "Take your legal matters elsewhere, sir, where your insolence will be tolerated."

"I never brought them to you."

"Ha, hum! Well, don't."

"But I will find some other lawyer who will probe this affair," cried Dick, excitedly.

"Oh, you will? Maybe you mean to threaten me, sir? Get out, sir—get out—or I will kick you out."

Dick Hardy in utter astonishment at the lawyer's sudden change of tactics, reached the outer door as Bluff made a menacing motion toward him.

Bluff hastened to a window, and glanced down at the street.

"There they go," he muttered, complacently. "Boy dazed at it all, and the captain on his trail. Now then, Mull, in an hour you go to Sailors' Delight, and see what Scrooge has to report. Then we take up our scheme where this young meddler interrupted us."

Dick Hardy reached the street in a wondering daze of perplexity. The interview in the lawyer's office had amazed him.

Dick walked on a square or two, and finally paused at a building where the signs of numerous offices were displayed at the entrance.

"All lawyers!" he muttered. "Excuse me, sir," he said to a

man standing in the doorway, "but can you direct me to some first-class lawyer?"

Just as Dick spoke these words, a rough-looking man who had followed him closely, unseen by Dick, clear from Mortimer Bluff's office, stepped up hastily.

He grasped the arm of the startled Dick in an iron clasp.

"Aha!" he cried, fiercely, "I've found you at last, eh?"

"Sir, I do not know you!" cried Dick, struggling to free himself.

"Ho, ho! you don't. How innocent! Hey, cabby, drive this way!" he shouted to a passing vehicle.

The driver came to the curb.

"Let me go!" cried Dick.

"Not much."

"Oh, sir! help me. I do not know this man," cried Dick to the man he had spoken to.

"What are you doing with that boy?" demanded the latter coming forward excitedly.

"None of your business," replied Dick's captor.

"Yes, it is. You can't kidnap a boy in this way."

"Kidnap! He's a thief and runaway. You just call a policeman if you like. He'll soon help me to jail this young rascal."

"Help!"

The stranger dragged Dick to the cab, thrust him in, and then the vehicle dashed rapidly down the street.

CHAPTER X.

DUDLEY RALSTON'S PLOTS.

"I helped you most."

"No, I did."

"And you promised that I should succeed you as president of the Night Owls," cried Dale Vincent.

"And me, too," vociferated Dave Little.

"Well, I guess that Dave ought to have the presidency," remarked the august head officer of the Night Owls, Dudley Ralston. "As to you, Dale, here's the money I promised you, and I'll send you a present from London—sure."

It was two days after the mysterious departure of Dick Hardy from Brighton, and the trio stood in secret conclave on the village green.

"It was a grand revenge," said Dudley, triumphantly.

"Yes, it settled Mr. Dick Hardy," replied Dave.

Yes, to all seeming, the enemies of Dick had triumphed.

Everybody in Brighton knew the morning succeeding Alice Marshall's party that Dick Hardy had disgraced himself and his friends terribly.

Rumor had it that he had appeared at the Marshall mansion too intoxicated to talk straight, and after scattering a pack of cards and a pocketful of cigars about the elegantly furnished parlors, had been ejected from the house by the indignant judge.

That was not the worst of it. Later two boxes of cigars had been found in Dick's room at the grocer's home.

These had been stolen from Scroggins, the peddler, and as they

were the same kind of cigars that Dick had at the party, of course he was the thief.

Then, too, Mr. Stokes, the grocer, stated that Dick had collected a bill for thirty dollars and had disappeared with it.

"He has fled with his booty, the hypocrite and thief!" commented Scroggins, and half of Brighton believed it.

At the Marshall mansion the judge looked serious and amazed, and pretty Alice sad and regretful as they witnessed the downfall of their favorite.

As to Dudley Ralston, he was in cloyer. A hated enemy and rival had been removed from his path, and he was exultant over the outcome of his wicked schemes.

He pledged all his accomplices to the strictest secrecy, and bribed them to continued silence and fidelity to his cause after his departure from Brighton.

That event Dudley Ralston now looked forward to with the greatest delight.

The Marshalls started for New York the ensuing day, and he was to accompany them.

Dudley put in his time before the steamer sailed viewing the sights of the city, and escorting Alice from place to place, an honor and pleasure by which he hoped to fully secure his place in her affections as "her best beau."

It was late in the afternoon of the day of the intended departure, and the others were getting their baggage ready for the steamer, when a bulky letter was handed Dudley at the hotel office.

He regarded its inclosures with some surprise, and read the one intended for him with dismay.

It was in the irregular handwriting of his father, the Honorable Jehu Ralston, and was dated at the national capitol.

"My Dear Dudley," it ran. "In the hopes of catching you before the steamer sails, I write you post-haste.

"You must not go to Europe, but come back at once to Brighton, where I go to-day.

"You see, we never know in this world what a day brings forth.

"It's brought poverty for me and you. That's the hard, disagreeable fact, boy.

"My entire fortune has been swept away by a bad speculation I went into, and when I pay the debts I have to pay, me and you will have to grub for a living or starve.

"Don't go with Marshall, I can't pay him back, and you must now help to support me:

"My term of office ends this week, and the salary has been paid. I have barely enough to pay incidental expenses here and home.

"Give the judge the inclosed letter. It tells him all. Sorry; but we all make mistakes in this uncertain world. He will give you money to get home. Your father,

"JEHU RALSTON."

Dudley Ralston sat, overcome completely, for some moments after reading this unexpected letter.

It crushed him, and the thought of foregoing the European trip, and returning to Brighton a pauper, dismayed him.

"We're ready, Dudley. Are you?" asked the judge, approaching him at that moment.

Dudley thrust the letter into his pocket hastily.

"Yes," he replied, "all ready."

He looked pale and grim, as they reached the steamer.

"I won't give my father's letter to Judge Marshall!" he decided. "I won't say a word about my own. I'll have the fun of this trip, even if the judge does have to pay for it. A pauper, eh? Well, if I could get Alice Marshall to marry me, and win her father's fortune!"

And then, as the steamer sailed from land, the crafty Dudley Ralston flung overboard the letters he had received from his father, and knew that he was safe to figure under false colors, at least until they reached England.

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE SAILORS' DELIGHT.

"You keep quiet."

The man who had thrust Dick Hardy into the cab enforced these words by almost crushing his prisoner's arm in his fierce grasp, as Dick sought to escape.

The vehicle was a close one, and proceeded so rapidly that even if Dick had called out for help, it was improbable that any one would heed or hear him.

"Sailors' Delight, Dock Twenty-seven, East River!" called out the man to the driver, finally.

He was no other than the Captain Scrooge, for whom Bluff, the lawyer, had sent Abner Mull.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Dick, in an alarmed tone of voice.

Scrooge tightened his grasp on Dick's arm.

"See here, boy," he ground out, savagely, "you let well enough alone if you're wise. You're my prisoner for the present, and all the shouting and struggling in the world won't help you. I've handled too many runaway boys to be afraid of you, and the police know me and believe me."

"But I am not a runaway boy," cried Dick, anxiously.

"We'll pretend that you are until we know positively that you ain't, then," was the rough reply.

Dick made no further attempt to escape, for he considered it futile just then.

The cab began to near the East River, and finally paused in front of a low, two-story ancient house, the lower portion of which was occupied as a saloon.

Captain Scrooge alighted, and, never losing his grasp of Dick, paid the cabman.

Scrooge dragged him through the saloon to a stairway, down it, across a dark, damp room, and thrust him into an apartment that had an iron-barred door.

"That's your bunk for a time," said Scrooge, as he locked the door and returned upstairs.

About four o'clock two men entered the adjoining room. Dick had lain down on the cot, and he did not arise as he recognized the newcomers.

They were Mortimer Bluff and Captain Scrooge.

"There he is, Bluff," spoke the gruff voice of Scrooge.

"What do you want done with him?"

"Keep him till he's shipped away."

"Oh! that's the game?"

"I'll ship him to the antipodes, if possible."

"Well, I can accommodate you."

"How so?"

"*Etruria*, schooner, sails in four days, in ivory trade, sails for South Africa and India. Captain Luke Danbridge; know him?"

"A marine monster!"

"Give him a hundred and the boy never comes back."

"I'll see. Come, I don't care to have him see me," and Bluff went out.

Dick made a dozen unsuccessful efforts to escape, and then abandoned the venture in despair.

The third day, Scrooge came down to the cellar, and with him was a man at whom Dick Hardy gazed with a shudder of fear.

He was a burly, red-faced ruffian, who was just intoxicated enough to be sullen, and he bore a heavy cane in his hand.

"There's the boy, Captain Danbridge," spoke Scrooge, as he pointed to the barred door to which Dick clung, staring out at them.

"Let's have a look at him?" growled Captain Danbridge, in a terrible voice.

CHAPTER XII.

AFLOAT.

Captain Scrooge unlocked the door of Dick Hardy's prison apartment, and the latter stepped out into view, glad of an opportunity to have freedom of locomotion after his cramped, close solitude.

"Step around faster," he ordered, striking Dick a smart blow with his cane.

"He'll do," commented Danbridge, after a brief inspection. "I'll make him help the cook."

"Or cabin boy?"

"Got one."

"Captain," cried Dick, approaching Danbridge, "please listen to me."

"Forge ahead!"

"I do not wish to sail on your ship."

"Aha!"

"And I'll never work for you if you make me go."

"Ho, ho!" chuckled Danbridge, grasping his cane more tightly.

"These men have no right to ship me off this way."

Danbridge turned to Scrooge.

"Scrooge," he said, "you give me a paper?"

"I do."

"Signed by——"

"John Smith."

"Exactly. This boy's father?"

"Of record," winked Scrooge.

"It gives me charge of his disobedient son for one cruise?"

"That's it."

"Signed, sealed, and delivered by said mourning parent?"

"Right you are."

"Then I have nothing to do with the boy's wishes, except to lick the tantrums out of him with a rope's end. Shut up!"

"Get in!"

The iron door clanged on the agonized Dick once more. He was in the darkest despair. All the world seemed leagued against him to steal him away from society and degrade him to a slave's life.

Later in the day, Mr. Scrooge brought Dick some food, and took the water jug away, but returned with the latter soon afterward.

It was only after he had taken several drinks from it that a new and startling truth began to dawn on Dick's mind.

He had been drugged!

He was sure of it, as he began to experience a dull lethargy. He fought the sensation for some time, and then merged involuntarily into a deep, sodden sleep.

When he awoke, he knew that he was in a strange place.

He could feel the swaying movement of a ship.

"Afloat!" murmured Dick, in a startled tone of voice. "They have drugged me, and brought me to the *Etruria*, Captain Danbridge's ship!"

He could hear the tramping of heavy footsteps overhead, and the swash of the waves against the sides of the ship.

Apparently, he was locked into some small apartment of the fore-castle of the ship, and lay upon a bunk containing a blanket.

He soon went to sleep again. He was rudely awakened early in the morning by a sailor, who, without ceremony, dragged him out of the bunk.

"Breakfast!" he growled. "No lagging; follow me!"

The sailor led the way to where a dozen rough-featured men were seated at a bare deal table, and Dick was hungry enough to appreciate the muddy coffee and black bread and pork that it contained.

"Captain wants to see you," said the same man who had awakened Dick, as the latter completed his meal.

"Where will I find him?" asked Dick.

"Cabin."

Dick came upon deck. He gazed around him in vacant amazement and dismay.

Land was nowhere in sight, and the *Etruria*, with every sail set, was speeding away from his native shores.

"Get along, there!" spoke the mate of the ship, as he dealt Dick a blow that sent him reeling to the mast. "No gaping here!"

Dick said nothing, but a firm, resolute expression came into his face.

The bearing of mate and sailors indicated that life aboard the ship would be worse than slavery.

Dick found the cabin door open. He entered boldly. At a

table, with an immense flask of liquor before him, and half intoxicated, sat Captain Danbridge.

"Hello!" he ejaculated, as he bent a fierce scowl on Dick. "Who told you to come in that way?"

"You sent for me."

"Go back and tap at the door, tip your hat, and make the naval salute."

Dick stood stock-still.

"Do you hear me?"

"Yes."

"Do it, then!"

"I won't! Captain Danbridge, you and I may as well understand each other now as any other time. I am a prisoner, not a sailor. I have been stolen away. I won't work for you. I won't obey you!"

With a terrible cry of rage, Captain Danbridge arose. He seized Dick by the arm; he fairly dragged him up the cabin stairs on deck.

"Ahoy there, mate!" he thundered.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Strip that boy."

Two sailors ran up and tore off Dick's jacket. They rent his shirt in two, and exposed his bare shoulders.

Dick struggled, and for a moment freed himself.

The next moment he had leaped sheer overboard.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OCEAN STEAMER.

Darkness had spread over the waters, intense and terrible, a warning wind sang in the offing, a faint translucent film partially shut out the stars.

The *Etruria* had sail on, abandoning its recent passenger to the misty silence of its wake, after a brief and ineffectual search for Dick Hardy.

"He's gone to Davy Jones' locker, sure, captain!" announced the mate, as he returned with the yawl and no signs of Dick.

"Serves him right. He can't break the discipline of this ship, nor no other lubber!" growled Danbridge, as he staggered to the cabin again.

Meanwhile, Dick was having a hard time of it in the icy water. He could swim and float well, and for hours it seemed to him he bobbed about in the water. He was just giving up hope, when his eye caught something above the waves.

"A light—a light!"

The words rang from Dick Hardy's lips in thrilling tones.

In the vague distance, a spark of luminosity was visible, and he hailed it with delight and hopefulness.

It seemed to be bearing directly down upon him.

Other lights seemed near it. Then a vague outline, as that of an ocean ship, filled the horizon of his anxious vision.

He began to shout, as loud as he could, lest the advancing ship, for such it was, should change its course.

On it came, never a more welcome harbinger of hope to shipwrecked mariner!

It was an ocean steamer. Dick could make that out now.

Its bow clove the waters like an arrow, and actually tossed the foam across his face, so near was he to it on his frail life-preserver.

He could read the name, in great, glaring letters of gilt, far overhead on the bow:

"Tripoli."

Half the length of the ship passed; it seemed to make a sudden lurch.

Dick was struck by the solid timbers as by a blow from a club.

"He-lp!"

His voice died out, and vision, too, and he knew no more.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON BOARD THE "TRIPOLI."

Two sailors, smoking astern, had heard Dick's cry.

"Did ye hear that, Jack?" asked one of them, as Dick's first appeal for help rang out faintly.

Both men peered ahead, and over the sides of the ship.

"Man overboard! The boats!"

"Stow yer jaw! A line—quick! Over I go!"

Ben Arbuckle acted on impulse, doughty sailor that he was.

He seized a rope's end.

Splash!

Jack Bowline caught the other end.

The passengers of the steamer were in their cabins, but the crew were about the deck.

A score or more hardy mariners came running to the spot curiously.

The mate ordered the line drawn in. A moment later Ben Arbuckle appeared over the rail, a senseless burden on one arm.

"A boy!" cried the mate.

The mate lifted the insensible Dick in his own arms, and bore him to the cabin.

Ben Arbuckle was given his charge. An hour later, Dick Hardy slumbered placidly in a bunk in the sailors' cabin.

Ben was a good sailor, and a favorite on the steamer.

He nursed Dick carefully for several days, and from his wanderings caught the story of his terrible punishment on the *Etruria*.

The passengers had heard of the rescue, and discussed it as quite an exciting event amid the monotony of a placid sea voyage.

Clyde Vance, a distant relative of Ben's, was clerk of the ship, and he became quite interested in Dick, as the latter began to grow better.

Dick, however, was woefully changed and thin.

With his hair cropped short, a sailor's suit on, and the pallor of his recent severe illness still manifest in his face, even near friends would have hardly recognized him in a crowd.

They had found no papers on him, for his coat had been left on board the *Etruria* when he made his escape.

But in his vest pocket Ben had come across a matchbox. It was one that Dick had found on the street in New York City, and across its silver plate was scratched a name—"Dan Evans."

So Ben assumed that to be the name of his young *protégé*, and so Dick found himself called when he came to himself again.

"They do not know my right name," he mused, the day he was able to sit up.

"Well, I intended to use a false one hereafter, until I learned the secret that had caused me all my trouble. Otherwise, Mortimer Bluff might get track of me. Dan Evans will do as well as any other name, so Dan Evans be it!"

Dick had ample time for reflection now. Ben seemed to have taken a great liking to him, and saw that he was made comfortable, and devoted most of his time off duty to his care.

He learned that the steamer was the *Tripoli*, and outward bound, from New York to Liverpool.

The captain had only questioned him briefly, and suggested that Clyde, the clerk, should use him as an assistant.

Clyde tried him, and was delighted with Dick's intelligence and ability.

That very afternoon he took Dick to his little office.

"You can help me considerably," he said. "I've a lot of lists to make out and the books to write up. Here, you sit at the table, and I'll dictate. First, a copy of the passenger list."

Clyde began to read out the names of the passengers, and Dick wrote them down on a sheet of paper.

Suddenly, Dick started violently.

"What's the matter, Evans?" asked Clyde, surprisedly.

"That—that last name, sir?"

"Thomas Marshall."

Dick Hardy continued to write, but his heart beat violently.

"Miss Alice Marshall."

Dick's hand trembled. A blur was before his eyes.

The Marshalls! They were passengers on board the *Tripoli*! Fate had sent them together again!

"Got that, Evans?"

"Yes, sir."

"Dudley Ralston."

"Dudley Ralston," repeated Dick, faintly, all the past revived by these familiar names.

"Richard Hardy!"

Dick fell back, groped, stammered, and the pen dropped from his nerveless hand.

CHAPTER XV.

A STARTLING SURPRISE.

The clerk stared at Dick Hardy, wonderingly, unable to comprehend the true cause of his strange actions, and attributing them to weakness or excitement incidental to his recent illness.

"You ain't strong enough to work yet, Evans," he said, solicitously. "Just rest a while."

"Oh, no, sir," replied Dick, with an effort. "I'm all right now. Please go on, sir. I—I enjoy the task, and I am all right now."

So the list was concluded, Dick recognizing, further, the names of a family from Brighton that had accompanied Judge Marshall on his European tour.

He was glad when the work was over, for his head was in a sad whirl.

The discoveries he had made startled and overcame him.

"Just lie down and rest a while in my cot, Evans," said Clyde, kindly; "your eyes look tired. Do they pain you?"

"A little, sir."

"Here, wear my sea-goggles for a day or two; they'll strengthen your sight. The change to salt air often affects people."

Clyde handed Dick a pair of black goggles. They had crepe ends, and effectually concealed the eyes, and Dick hailed their acquisition as a positive disguise, and was glad of it.

He tried to think over everything, as he lay on the clerk's cot.

What perplexed and overwhelmed him was the mystifying appearance of the name of Richard Hardy on the passenger list.

He did a little more writing for Clyde, and then the latter told him to go on deck, and enjoy the beautiful evening as he chose.

Dick glanced at a mirror, and smiled complacently. Cropped hair, nautical costume, and black goggles made him but slightly resemble the Dick Hardy of Brighton.

There was no danger of the Marshalls or Dudley Ralston recognizing him if he should chance to meet them.

He went on deck timidly. The passengers were distributed around on camp stools and lounges, watching the placid sea and sky, and conversing and reading.

Many of them stared curiously at Dick, as the captain told them who he was, the boy who had been rescued a few days previously.

Dick became somewhat excited as he noticed near the cabin the familiar form of Judge Marshall. He was reading, and a few feet from him, busily embroidering, was his daughter, Alice.

She looked prettier than ever, and Dick experienced a weary longing, as he seemed to consider that, somehow or other, their old friendship had been broken—that the past had made a wide gulf between them; that, socially, they were divided by a chasm he dared not attempt to span.

"Hello, my hearty!" spoke a cheery voice. "On deck at last, eh?" And Ben Arbuckle grasped Dick's hand warmly.

"Yes, Ben."

"Come astern; how is work in the clerk's office?"

"Capital!"

"You'll forget your humble friends among the nobs, Evans!"

"Never, brave old Ben!" replied Dick, fervently. "Say, Ben, I want to ask you a question."

"Go ahead, my hearty."

"Do you know most of the passengers?"

"All of them, lad."

"Who is Richard Hardy?"

"A boy who's going to England. He dresses like a dude, looks

like a singed cat, and says he is heir to a million. He seems to have plenty of money, and was booked for the best cabin on the ship."

"I'd like to see him," murmured Dick.

"Walk past the cabin, and cast your eyes leeward through the lower skylight. The young land shark is torturing the piano."

Dick walked with Ben past the cabin.

The heart of the real Richard Hardy stood still.

Whirling on the piano stool was a boy, and, as his face came into full view, Dick recognized him instantly.

It was not Richard Hardy—he never had been Richard Hardy. No; it was Abner Mull!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIVALS.

Dick Hardy was a quick thinker. As he recognized the boy entered on the steamer's passenger list as Richard Hardy as the ill-favored clerk of the wily New York lawyer, Mortimer Bluff, a great light broke over his mind.

That name, so far as Abner Mull was concerned, was a stolen one.

The evening that the *Tripoli* sailed from New York harbor, Lawyer Bluff and his young accomplice, Mull, held a brief but important consultation in the dingy office of the former.

"Mull," Bluff said, "you have your luggage?"

"Four suits of clothes, and the rest, you bet," croaked Mull, with a serene chuckle.

"I will give you the other three hundred dollars, but you are too extravagant."

"We'll soon have a million."

"Maybe."

"You get the lion's share, then, so be content."

"Have you the papers?"

"Yes; all of them."

"You know your part?"

"Perfectly."

"The Honorable Lionel Graham, Marchmont Square, London."

"I understand."

"The other boy is out of the way, and you must not fail. Have you registered as Richard Hardy?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Now, then, good-by; and when you obtain any money, send me my share."

"Will I get the fortune all at once?"

"You can only try."

So Abner Mull, figuring as an impostor, became a passenger on the *Tripoli*.

He appeared on deck clad in a flaming crimson smoking-jacket, blue satin slippers, Turkish fez, and with an air of aristocratic *negligée* that made him the wonder of the passengers and the merriment of the crew.

Alice Marshall stood with her father, waving an adieu to some friends ashore, as the *Tripoli* sailed.

A light puff of wind happened to drift her fine silk handkerchief from her hand.

"A deuced pretty girl!" Master Abner Mull had just commented. Then he saw the flying handkerchief, caught it, and returned it, with a respectful bow, and received a grateful smile in return.

"She's struck with me, sure!" decided the coxcomb; and, after that, he obtruded his attention upon the Marshalls on every occasion possible.

Later that evening, he heard the judge complaining that Alice's stateroom was not next to that of her aunt.

"And number ten, the one we want, is occupied, papa," Alice murmured.

"Ha, h'm! Number ten," soliloquized Mull. "That's mine! Here's a place for a master stroke of *finesse*, as Bluff would say."

Master Mull went at once to his stateroom, and soon after a perfumed note was handed to the wondering Alice by a servant.

It read:

"Richard Hardy presents his compliments to Miss Alice Marshall, and begs to acknowledge that he overheard her desire to occupy stateroom ten.

"R. H. will be glad to exchange with Miss Marshall; always willing to oblige the ladies. R. S. V. P."

The ignoramus thought it smart to abbreviate. He did not know what R. S. V. P. meant, but he had seen it in books of etiquette, and tacked it on, anyway!

Judge Marshall saw the captain, and Mr. Mull was visited. The judge frowned at his pert familiarity, but he considered Alice's comfort, and accepted the exchange of staterooms gratefully.

"I don't like that Hardy, papa," said Alice next day. "His smile reminds me of a fox."

"Tolerate him, dear," said her aunt, placidly. "He's a great, conceited dandy, but on a long voyage you must be friends with everybody, and he seems real kind-hearted, for he brought me several oranges when I was seasick."

So Master Mull was allowed to promenade the deck with Alice, and Dudley Ralston, who was also a passenger, hated him for it, and the two boys had become bitter enemies the second day out.

Alice and her father had expressed considerable surprise at the name of their new acquaintance, Richard Hardy.

Mull was shrewd enough to find out that they had known Dick Hardy, but of course professed to know nothing of him, and gave but few details of his past life, except to get up a fiction about having been to school in Boston, and now on his way to England to take possession of a million that he had inherited.

The real Dick Hardy had his work with the clerk to do, that occupied considerable of his time days. Evenings, however, he remained on deck, and one evening the dull life of watching and waiting knew some startling developments.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BAFFLED LOVER.

The voyage, so far, had been delightfully calm and uneventful. In eight days the ship would arrive at Liverpool, if no accident intervened, and there seemed a promise of the continuance of fair weather, clear skies, and unruffled seas.

The next day Dick got as near to Alice and Mull as he dared without attracting their attention, and tried to overhear their conversation.

"That was sort of singular, Miss Alice," the listening Dick heard Mull say; "you knowing a boy of my name."

Alice looked sad at the allusion.

"Yes, Mr. Hardy," she replied, "he was a very warm friend—once."

"Out of the books now, eh?" laughed Mull, coarsely. "Dudley said something about his cutting up bad."

"He fell into temptation, and—and ran away," murmured Alice, in a subdued tone, the sympathy it expressed causing Dick's heart to beat violently. "I beg of you not to allude to it further. It is a painful subject."

"I hope all Richard Hardys are not distasteful to you, Miss Alice?" pursued Mull, with a grin he deemed clever.

"Don't be silly, Mr. Hardy."

"I ain't silly, Alice. I'm dead in earnest!" replied Mull, excitedly. "I have learned to love you, Alice."

Abner Mull forgot time and place.

He dropped to one knee. He caught Alice's hand, and was about to give a faithful copy from a love scene in a thrilling melodrama.

Alice actually laughed in his face, but he did not notice it.

"Become mine!" he said, in a stage villain tone of voice. "All me life's devotion shall be yours!"

"The young booby!" ejaculated the judge, half angrily, as he viewed the situation from where he was seated, nearby.

He crossed the deck quickly, cane in hand.

"Miss Alice, charming Miss Alice, my life's devotion——"

"Mr. Hardy, if you don't stop this silliness, I shall never speak to you again."

"You young idiot, get up!"

With a sounding thwack, the judge's cane grazed the calves of Master Mull sharply.

Mull's dramatic pose became changed to that of a dumfounded culprit.

"You ought to be in school, instead of strutting around like a man!" spoke the indignant judge. "Young man, we will dispense with your companionship the remainder of the voyage."

Master Mull stared sullenly at Judge Marshall, and then slunk to his stateroom, whence for an hour succeeding emanated such tragical aspirations as:

"Ha, foiled! Cruel parent! Girl, ye have spurned me! Revenge—revenge!" and Master Mull nursed his revenge and his smarting shins, and greeted the Marshalls with the look of a deeply wronged individual when he met them the next day.

Alice laughed merrily at the escapade, and her aunt called her a coquette. Dudley Ralston loomed into favor again, but he learned of Mull's discomfiture, and was wise enough to leave his love-making until a later day.

"We're likely to meet some homebound steamers in the next few days," the captain announced at breakfast. "We have an opportunity to write home."

Dudley Ralston was one of the few who improved the opportunity. Dick saw him scribbling at the window of the cabin, and wondered what he was writing about.

Suddenly, as he sat on a bucket near the cabin, waiting for Clyde, the clerk, several sheets of paper blew from the windows where he had seen Dudley.

In a few moments, Dudley came from the cabin, and commenced searching for the scattered sheets.

One of them had blown against Dick's foot, and the latter had taken it up and glanced at it.

The page bore his name. Instantly he decided to secrete it.

The letter might reveal something that would tend to aid him in establishing his innocence of the crimes imputed to his charge at Brighton.

So Dick said nothing to Dudley, as he gathered the remainder of the sheets, and glanced overboard, as if he missed one, and believed that it had blown into the sea.

Dick had secreted the written sheet under his coat unperceived, and, as Dudley returned to the cabin, he went to the clerk's office.

He perused the scrawl, a partly written page, curiously.

"—having a good time," Dudley had written, "and expect a better one. I just write to pass away time. How is the Night Owls, and do they miss me much? Has anything been heard of Dick Hardy? I reckon not. Dale's soda-water and the cigars we planted in his room fixed him, I guess. There's a fellow on the ship that has the same name as him that I hate worse than him. I wish the Owls was here to dose him like we did our Hardy. He tries to shine around Alice Marshall, but I'll down him yet——"

Then the writing ended.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WRECKED.

The weather had changed, and rain and tempest had succeeded to summer skies and moonlit evenings. The *Tripoli* now plowed its way through high waves, and frequently ran afoul of large cakes of floating ice.

It was about dusk, when Judge Marshall and several gentlemen went forward, where the captain stood, and asked him plainly what the prospects were.

"There is nothing serious to apprehend, I imagine," said the captain, reassuringly. "We seem to have sailed right into a storm, but I am trying to evade it."

The wind was a perfect hurricane; a dense mist had spread over the deep, and ever and anon huge cakes of ice would strike the keel of the steamer, with a grinding, ominous thump.

The judge and his companions remained forward, somewhat anxiously regarding the erratic motions of the ship and the driving storm.

Suddenly a voice from aloft shouted out:

"Land ahead!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the captain. "There is no land within five hundred miles of us."

"Land ahead! Bear to sou'-sou'west; driving down on us from the lea bow!"

The captain shouted a quick command to the wheelman.

Crunch! Crash!

The steamer received a terrific shock, staggered, trembled, and dived forward again, but from no artificial progress.

"Wheel broke! right ship!" came the ominous call.

Yes, something had happened. A shiver of dread ran through the men around the captain, as they saw his face pale suddenly.

They soon knew the trouble. An immense ice floe had encountered the ship, struck the gearing, and disabled it.

"To the sails!"

"Right ship! We are running on land!" came the monotonous warning again from aloft.

A cry of horror rang from the lips of all who looked at that moment.

"Ship a-leak!"

Simultaneous with the dreaded cry, there loomed up directly ahead of the steamer a high, white mass, that stole so suddenly from the dense mists that it seemed to be a wraith from obscurity.

"An iceberg!"

It struck the steamer—it seemed to clasp the ship in an icy embrace.

Crash!

The stanch old steamer trembled in every timber. There was a terrific concussion, and, as the iceberg split in twain, a hundred tons of ice fell amidships, crushing sails, masts, and after-cabin into an indistinguishable mass.

From below, the most frightful cries of helplessness and terror now ensued. The steamer, with disabled machinery, a-leak, virtually broken in twain, whirled round and round, a mere plaything at the mercy of the fierce tempest.

The fallen iceberg had shut off the captain, a portion of the crew, and Judge Marshall and his companions.

In alarm and dismay, these latter saw the terrible barrier that had fallen between them and their friends abaft.

"My child—my Alice!" cried the judge, wildly, and sprang forward.

A crumbling piece of ice fell at that moment, and struck him senseless to the deck.

"Look to yourselves!" shouted the captain. "We are shut off from the cabins! In five minutes the ship will sink!"

All the boats were in the after portion of the steamer. The captain, and those of his crew about him, began to lash the wood gratings together to form a raft.

Dick Hardy was seated in the cabin when the shock came.

He rushed on deck at the warning cry of the sailors.

Dudley Ralston and the craven Abner Mull were wild with terror, and the sailors fairly fought them to prevent them from reaching the lifeboats before the women and children were cared for.

"Alice, Alice! Oh I feared that you——"

Dick forgot everything amid his excitement, but the pale-faced, alarmed Alice Marshall, who appeared at that moment from the cabin, never noticed his words of greeting.

"Run larboard! She's listing over!"

A cry of alarm broke from Dick Hardy's lips.

The steamer had careened, with a sudden lurch, that drove him from his feet.

He heard Alice shriek, as she glided downward, and then she was borne by a huge wave over the side of the ship, and into the sea.

Dick, too, was swept downward. The next moment he was struggling in the water. He clutched desperately at a form swept by him. He saw the pale face of Alice Marshall, and then, clinging to a grating that floated by, he looked around for some sign of the boats already adrift.

"Help! This way!" he shouted, as through the mists he made out one of the boats.

He could scarcely retain his hold of Alice. She had fallen an insensible burden on his arm. The fierce waves almost bore her from his grasp several times.

"Catch the hook!" shouted a gruff voice, as a boat neared Dick.

The next moment he was dragged into a crowded yawl, and Alice with him.

In bewildered excitement, he glanced about him. The *Tripoli*, sinking, a hopeless wreck, drifted on astern—all around were the small boats and a raft, engaged in rescuing and distributing the rescued passengers.

"My child! My child! Alice! Alice!" cried a frantic voice from the raft, as the yawl neared it to receive the orders of the captain.

"Mr. Marshall, she is here, safe!" cried Dick, in thrilling tones, as he recognized the voice of the anguished speaker.

Judge Marshall almost fell into the sea as he frantically sprang toward the yawl.

"Keep together as much as possible," ordered the captain. "We are all safe; none have been lost—none need be! We shall be picked up by some ship by morning."

CHAPTER XIX.

RESCUED.

Dick Hardy crouched down in a seat of the yawl, and held on to an oar, ready for orders, as the boats and raft drifted apart again.

The gruff voice of Ben Arbuckle sounded out a minute later, and Dick knew that he was in command.

Dudley Ralston was shivering and wailing in the bottom of the boat.

All that night the yawl fought the storm and the waves.

Morning showed a fog-covered expanse of water. The raft and the other boats had become lost in the mists the night previous.

There was an ample supply of provisions and water in the boat, and all spirits revived with daylight.

Alice shuddered as she told her father of being swept into the sea, and cried as she thanked Dan Knight, for that was the name Dick chose to be called by, when Ben pointed him out as her rescuer.

No one who might have recognized Dick Hardy suspected the identity of the grim, silent boy, who thought only of obeying Ben's orders all that day.

At dusk, the mists cleared, but they were alone on the great deep. No friendly ship passed them, and they vainly scanned the blue expanse the long night through for a light, as the current seemed to drift them rapidly southward.

It was early the next morning when the lookout shouted, excitedly:

"sail!"

Soon all aboard the little yawl were scanning the clear horizon. A ship was in sight. They signaled it frantically. They were seen. Nearer and nearer it came, and then, with glad hearts, the weary voyagers found themselves aboard a stanch ocean craft once more.

They soon learned the name and destination of the ship—the *Colombo*, a Spanish brig, bound from Spain to Brazil, with a cargo of wine and human ballast in the shape of twenty revolutionists condemned to exile from their native country by the government.

They had spoken a Cunarder a day back, which had rescued a lot of castaways from the *Tripoli*, so the voyagers knew that their companions in peril were safe, and on their way to England.

The captain offered to touch at the first land on his voyage south, and, of course, this was the best the castaways could expect.

The troubles of the voyagers had made all friendly, one to another, and even Dudley and Mull had become more sociable than in the past.

Twenty-four hours on the southern journey, a meeting with another ship changed the plans of the voyagers once more.

This craft was the *Balbriggan*, bound for the northern coast of Ireland, and the two ships drifted near together until Judge Marshall arrived at a conclusion as to what he would do.

It was finally decided that he, his sister, Alice, Dudley, and Mull were to start for Europe on the Irish schooner, and Dick and Ben Arbuckle accompanied them, the latter hoping to meet his old captain in England.

Judge Marshall, out of gratitude for his rescue of Alice, offered to pay Dick's fare, but Dick made an arrangement with the captain of the *Balbriggan* to work his way.

Two weeks later, the *Balbriggan* arrived at the little seaport of Troyle, on the rugged coast of Ireland, and the voyagers were safely sheltered in the old-fashioned hotel at that place.

Dick, aside from doing what he could at sailor's duty, had helped the captain make out an invoice of the cargo in detail, which was his own property, and received three pounds, or about fifteen dollars in American money, for the task.

So he was not penniless when he, too, with the others, put up at the hotel at Troyle.

He had deferred his plan of revealing his identity to the Marshalls. He had concealed it carefully—had rather evaded them.

Once at the hotel, however, the Marshalls seemed determined to regard him as an equal and friend, and he heard Alice say to her father, as he passed their apartments:

"Papa, that boy, Knight, is a mystery to me. Sometimes I think I have heard his voice before. Why does he always wear those ugly goggles?"

"His sight was injured at sea, I believe," replied the judge. "I, too, am deeply interested in him. I asked him where he came from, and what his prospects were."

"And what did he say?" asked Alice, curiously.

"That he was a friendless orphan boy, and that he intended to go to England, in the hope of finding some distant relatives. He did not seem to wish to speak of the past, so I did not press him. He is a noble young fellow, and it absolutely pains him to allude to his brave efforts to save your life."

"Will he go with us to London, papa?"

"Yes; and Dudley and Hardy, too. There we leave the boys. I shall try to prevail on Knight to allow me to make him a substantial present before he leaves us. We will have to wait here for a steamer for Liverpool for a few days, and will have an opportunity to view some genuine Irish scenery."

CHAPTER XX.

A WILD EXPLOIT.

"That's your game, is it?"

"That's my game, as you call it. Now, Hardy, am I mistaken in you, or can I trust you?"

Abner Mull looked crafty.

It was the second day after the arrival of the *Balbriggan* at Troyle, and he and Dudley Ralston stood near the seashore, engaged in earnest conversation.

Mull remained lost in reflection so long that Dudley grew impatient.

"You and I were enemies," he said, at last. "I hated you because you were a rival. Well, that is ended now. Father and girl have pretty plainly gone back on you."

Mull made a wry face.

"And me worth a million," he muttered.

"Two millions wouldn't make any difference with the judge," replied Dudley; "now, the girl likes me."

"She don't show it."

"Well, she does, only she's a coquette. She's known me for a long time, and I think my father and hers always had an idea that we'd make a match some day."

Mull looked doubtful of this.

"Then why don't you wait and see?" he demanded.

"Because I'm in a bad box. My father is a pauper, and, as soon as Marshall knows it, and my deception, he'll ship me home."

"And good-by Alice."

"Exactly. Now, I'm no fool. I'm not going back to Brighton to work. Marshall is wealthy. Alice will be his heiress. I'm going to marry her."

"If she'll have you."

"She's got to. Oh, I know girls. All romance and sentiment. She will consent when she finds I'm in earnest. Will you help me, or will you not? That's the question."

"Yes, I will."

"Good."

"I'm no pig. It's no sour grapes for me. I can't have the girl myself, but it would just suit my revenge to have her bother her father by running away with you. Yes, I'll help you. Now, then, what's your plan?"

"Very simple. Alice and her aunt have invited us to drive them down to Dragon's Rock to-morrow."

"Yes."

"Near there, you and I discovered the ruined tower yesterday."

"And the old, drunken magistrate who owns it, too."

"I'll invite Alice for a walk, to view some inland scenery. You engage the attention of the aunt."

"All right."

"I'll get Alice to the tower, steal out, lock the door, and for the five pounds I have the old justice has promised to marry us. Ha, ha! I flatter myself that plot is almost as romantic as a play."

"Capital—great!" commented Mull. "But if the girl refuses?"

"Oh, she won't! The romance of it will captivate her. Then we return to the hotel, own up the truth, and what's Judge Marshall going to do about it?"

"Rave, and storm, and then make the best of it."

"And I'm married to a rich heiress. Hurrah!"

That was Dudley Ralston's latest scheme, and now it seemed easy of execution.

Abner Mull's insinuating ways had made him a favorite with Alice's aunt, and he engaged her attention to some beautiful shells

he had gathered on the beach while his companion walked away with Alice.

"Such a romantic tower!" Dudley told her. "It must be fully two hundred years old."

And soon they had reached it, and Alice, delighted at viewing the original of what she had seen in books of travel, entered the dilapidated structure, and climbed the rickety stairs to its top.

"Alice, I love you, and want to marry you!"

Alice Marshall looked at Dudley Ralston as if she believed that he had taken leave of his senses.

"Is the little boy reciting a piece for the stage?" she railed. "Come, Dudley, don't be silly."

Dudley was gone, and the great door at the top of the tower was locked.

Meantime, events of importance had transpired at the hotel at Troyle.

A steamer had been sighted and signaled, and Judge Marshall came to Dick, as he sat in his room reading a book.

"Knight," he said, "would you do me a favor?"

"Yes, Judge Marshall," replied Dick, promptly.

"A steamer has been hailed, and we can sail for Liverpool at once. My folks and the boys have gone down to Dragon's Rock, and I wish you would drive down and tell them to hurry back and catch the steamer."

"All right, sir."

The judge secured a gig for Dick, and he was soon on the track of the excursionists.

Abner Mull looked terribly discomposed as Dick drove up to the beach where he and Miss Marshall were seated.

Dick reported his message from the judge.

"We must find Alice," said her aunt.

"Where is she, Miss Marshall? I'll find her," replied Dick.

"She walked toward some old tower, inland, with Dudley Ralston."

Dick hurried toward the interior.

Abner Mull waited until he was out of sight.

Then he said to Miss Marshall:

"I'll go in search of them, too."

"Very well, Richard."

"There'll be a row now, and Ralston is just mean enough to mix me up in it," muttered Mull, as he hurried in the direction that Dick had gone.

Half an hour later, as Dudley Ralston neared the ruined tower, a dissipated-looking man with him, Abner Mull emerged from behind a rock.

"No use, Dud," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Girl gone."

"Gone!" gasped Dudley.

"Yes."

"When—where?"

"Ten minutes since—home. Our cake's dough. She screamed for help, and that fellow, Knight, discovered her, and rescued her, and they've gone back to the hotel with the whole story."

Dudley Ralston stood petrified. In the words of the crafty Mull, his cake was, indeed, dough, and he was in a bad fix.

CHAPTER XXI.

A RACE FOR LONDON.

Judge Marshall was too enraged and indignant to speak coherently when Alice and her aunt and Dick Hardy returned from Dragon's Rock, and related to him what had occurred.

"The conceited jackanapes, to dare to think of such a thing as

marriage!" cried the judge. "Alice, I commend your sterling common sense, and you, Master Knight, you will only let me thank you," and the judge seized Dick's hand, and wrung it fervently.

"How romantic, brother, though," minced the weak-minded Miss Marshall. "I didn't think Dudley had so much sentiment in him."

"He positively frightened me, papa," murmured Alice, with a nervous shiver, "and brave Mr. Knight went back, after seeing aunt and myself safe in the carriage, to punish them."

"Them!" repeated the judge, surprisedly.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "Hardy was in the plot, also. That boy, Ralston, is more of a schemer than a fool, I imagine. He will not trouble you again, I guess. I hid near the tower, and heard him talk the entire affair over with Hardy. They had bribed a drunken magistrate to help them. Ralston has been deceiving you, sir. His father, it seems, has lost all his fortune, and he counted on wedding an heiress."

In deep amazement, Judge Marshall listened to Dick's story. It revealed all Dudley Ralston's chicanery.

Dick had not sought an encounter with Dudley, but had returned to the beach to see the ladies safely to the hotel again.

"Ralston will not return here," he said to the judge.

"He had better not, while I am here!" remarked the judge, irascibly. "The young scoundrel deserves a trouncing. I shall leave his fare to his friends in London with the landlord, and write his father, and wash my hands entirely of any responsibility for him."

Dudley Ralston did not return to the hotel at Troyle, nor did Abner Mull.

That afternoon, the steamer left, with the Marshalls, Dick Hardy, and Ben Arbuckle.

Ben had no money, but Dick had generously seen that his expenses were paid at Troyle and as far as Liverpool.

On the beach, where the pretended Dick Hardy, Abner Mull, had sat talking with Miss Marshall, the judge's sister, Dick had found an envelope, upon the back of which Mull had seemingly been trying to sketch a ship, and had then carelessly cast it away.

And this envelope bore the address: "Hon. Lionel Graham, Marchmont Square, London," the same, the reader will remember, that Mortimer Bluff had given Mull when he sailed in the *Tripoli* from New York.

The possession of that address by Abner Mull was, to Dick Hardy's way of thinking, proof positive that the Honorable Lionel Graham was the person, or, at least, one of the persons, to whom Bluff had sent him to learn of the fortune rightfully belonging to Dick Hardy himself.

About dusk that day, two boys rested, after a long jaunt, at the edge of a deep gully.

"How much farther is it, Hardy?" asked Dudley Ralston.

"Two miles, they said."

"Irish miles, I guess. Why, we've tramped ten already. I wonder if the Marshalls sailed?"

"Of course they did."

"It leaves me in a bad box."

"That's the cost of experiments."

"Drat that Knight! I'd have been all right only for him."

"I doubt it. The girl has more common sense than we thought. Well, anyway, we're on our own hook now. You've got no money?"

"Not a cent."

"I've got a little. I'll help you to London. When we reach Doldreggha, we can get a coach to the nearest steamship port. Come on."

"I'm in a nice fix," grumbled Dudley. "Look at my coat."

He had torn it clear open down the back in a fall over some rocks.

At a miserable hut, two women drove up in a gig, and from them the boys learned that Doldregha was only a short distance farther on.

They saw its distant lights at last, and the promise of shelter, rest, and food made the sullen-faced Mull pert and chatty once more.

"The Marshalls were only an incident to me," he said, bombastically, clinking some coins in his pocket. "I say, Dud, I wonder how I ever came to tolerate 'em? Expect in a month, or less, I'll be paying court to some princess, or the mayor's only daughter, or something of that sort. Doldregha, the steamer, a bit of blue water, Liverpool, London, and—a couple of millions, all my own! How's that for a prospect, eh, Dud?"

Dudley scowled; the glowing picture made his own forlorn condition seem so gloomy and hopeless that he muttered, covetously:

"If I had it, and you was me, I'd never go back on a friend."

"Got to, Dud, after reaching London," rattled on Mull. "Strict orders—make no friends, cut old ones. You see, I never saw my relatives, and they never saw me. All I've got to do, though, is drive up in a big, flaming barouche, send lackey in to announce my arrival. Rich relative greets me with open arms, like prodigal son. I just show letters; everything lovely; spend the night counting bonds, notes, and shoveling up gold. Hello! Don't drag me down! Dud, Dud! Where are you?"

A startling interruption had come to Mull's braggadocio words. They had been walking along a narrow cliff path, with the stars of light from the town as a guide to direction.

Dudley's eyes were filled with tears of mortification and resentment at Mull's good luck and his own bad fortune, so that he had forgotten the dangers of a night walk along that unfamiliar roadway.

Of a sudden he had stumbled. He caught at Mull, with a startled cry, as his foot slipped over the edge of the cliff. Then he fell, disappeared, and, as a wild scream echoed beyond the ledge of rocks, Mull peered down, with a frightened gasp of alarm.

"Help—quick!" choked out a terrified voice.

"Where are you? Oh, yes, I see you! Here; what shall I do? I'll lower my coat; catch hold of the sleeve!"

Mull tore off his coat, and lowered it over the ledge toward Dudley, whom he could see clinging to a bush that grew on the barren side of the incline.

"I can't reach it!" spoke Dudley, in hollow tones. "Lower a vine, or a branch."

"I've got it. There you are."

Mull had found a dead branch, and this he lowered. It was seized from below. Dudley grasped it with one hand, still, however, clinging with the other to the bush. He jerked it so eagerly as he grasped it that he precipitated a second catastrophe. The next minute Mull, pulled forward, fell headlong over the ledge, and landed on Dudley's arm, with a shock that almost stunned the latter.

He frantically grabbed at Dudley, slipped, slid, and was shaken off, and then an awful scream of terror escaped his lips, as he caught, too, at the friendly bush to which Dudley clung, and swung over the abyss, so deep and far below that it seemed fathomless to his horrified vision.

"Let go!" gasped Dudley, as the bush seemed to tear from its roots. "We'll both go down!"

"Grab at the next bush!" choked out the appalled Mull. "Don't you see, two can't hold to this?"

Selfish, craven Dudley Ralston now thought only of himself. He only relaxed his hold of the breaking shrub as it gave way, and grasped a second one at its side, as Mull, with a shrill scream of terror, went hurling downward through space.

How he ever reached the ledge above, gasping and paralyzed with terror, Dudley Ralston never knew. He fell to the ground, his blank face and startled eyes fixed on the dark void that yawned where his unfortunate companion had fallen.

"He's gone—it's the last of him, and I pulled him over; but I couldn't help it," gasped Dudley, and then, in a paroxysm of horror, he arose to his feet, and frantically screamed out Mull's name, as he understood it, at the top of his voice.

He took out his match-safe, and lit a lucifer, ignited a bunch of brush, and tossed it over the cliff. His haunted glance followed its course down a jagged incline toward a black, rushing stream of water, so far below that Dudley Ralston knew that it was useless to look farther for his late companion, unless it were for his mangled remains on the rocks, when daylight came.

"What shall I do? No money, no friends," he began, whiningly. "I don't care to tell people about Hardy. They'll say I murdered him. Oh, dear—hello, here's his coat!"

And money in it! That was the quick salve for dread, remorse, and loneliness. As the selfish Dudley Ralston ransacked the pockets of Mull's coat, and his fingers touched a wallet filled with crisp bills, and a webbed purse heavy with coin, his pallor departed, his eyes lost the glare of horror, for the covetous gleam they now took to their depths.

Money and papers. If Dudley Ralston had known that Mull was really alive, it is doubtful if he would have tried to have found him. Dudley threw away his own torn coat, put on that of Mull, and, with many an apprehensive look backward, as he guiltily realized his knavery, hurried toward the town.

Warmth, comfort, the knowledge that he had ample means again, made him excited and jovial to all he met, once beneath the roof of a comfortable hotel. Wine killed care, new discoveries caused the future to glow hopefully once more.

In the best room of the place, paid for by Abner Mull's money, Dudley Ralston sat smoking and drinking far into the night, poring over Abner Mull's papers, found in Abner Mull's abandoned coat.

"Hardy is a goner, that's sure," muttered Dudley. "I'm in a desperate bad box since I broke with the Marshalls. It's poverty back at Brighton—I must carry back a fortune or drudge. The fortune is here," and he tapped the papers. "'Mortimer Bluff to Abner Mull, i. e., Dick Hardy—instructions how to act.' 'Papers of proof in re Dick Hardy.' His relatives never knew this Hardy. They'll take up with any one having those papers. Dudley Ralston, if you've got grit and cheek enough to take Dick Hardy's place, it means a million. I'll do it!"

The next morning Dudley Ralston, full of his new scheme of imposition, fully worthy his evil nature, without another thought for the companion who had gone over the cliff at Doldregha, took steamer for Liverpool, en route for London.

Thus the bad Mortimer Bluff's great scheme for a fortune miscarried. Thus, at nearly the same hour, two boys were making for one objective point—the home of Honorable Lionel Graham, Marchmont Square, London, and success awaited the one who got there first.

CHAPTER XXII.

DUDLEY RALSTON'S PLOT.

The residence of the Honorable Lionel Graham, Marchmont Square, to which Dudley Ralston drove late one afternoon, was a low, one-story stone structure, gloomy and wretched looking.

Dudley lifted the knocker, and summoned all his nerve for the expected interview.

A slatternly servant answered the summons, and stared suspiciously at the pert, brazen-faced caller, who twirled a cheap watch-chain and puffed cigarette smoke in her face.

"Graham live here—Lionel?" demanded Dudley, audaciously.

"He do, and he don't," replied the servant, ungraciously. "What for do you want to know?"

"Business—important business."

"Who is it, Mary?" called out a gruff voice. "Show him in."

Dudley threw away his cigarette, and followed the servant into a hall. In a disordered room was a man, quite old, and surrounded by half a dozen satchels and trunks, which he had apparently been packing hastily. He stared at Dudley questioningly.

"Well?" he spoke, in a tone scarcely pleasant.

"Are you Mr. Graham?"

"No, I ain't; but I answer for him."

"I would like to see Mr. Graham himself."

"Don't doubt it. Well, you can, if you want to travel several thousand miles to do it."

Dudley stared in dismay and disappointment.

"Ain't he in London?"

"No; and hasn't been for many a month. What's your business? I'm in a hurry, and have no time to lose. Must catch a boat in two hours. I'm Graham's friend, confidential adviser and attorney. Speak it out."

"My name is Richard Hardy, and——"

"What!"

The man dropped the satchel he held with a slam, came to a petrified halt, and stared in incredulity and bewilderment at his young visitor.

"I'm Richard——"

"Hold on!" gasped the man. "Not Richard Hardy, of Boston, son of Robert Hardy, the one a New York lawyer named Bluff has been backing and filling about so long?"

"That's me," smiled Dudley, gaining courage as the man before him became more and more excited. "I have the papers to prove it. I scarcely understand it all myself, sir, but the papers will tell everything. I've had trouble getting here, shipwreck, and the efforts of enemies to rob me"—Dudley put this in to provide for any possible future appearance of Mull—"I——"

"See here," spoke the man, sinking to a seat, and staring wonderingly at Dudley. "I'm Graham's lawyer and friend, as I said," he told Dudley. "My name's Warlock. I know all about this affair. You've come too late."

"Too late!" gasped Dudley, in a hollow tone, flushing with amazement and suspicion at Warlock's ominous words.

"Yes; or, if you've got grit and energy, rather in the very nick of time. Six o'clock," mused Warlock, glancing at the clock on the mantel. "Only two hours left to get to the boat. See here, lad, you listen sharp while I talk, and I'll try to explain affairs."

Warlock talked rapidly. He told his visitor a strange story. The Honorable Lionel Graham was a very wealthy man. Five years previously he had fallen heir to a vast fortune, all in money, aggregating half a million pounds sterling, by the will of General Roderrick Hardy.

Graham was an invalid, a conscientious man, morbidly so, and

when he came into the fortune he did not plunge into luxury or dissipation, but set to work doing magnificent works of charity.

About two years later he learned that General Hardy had willed the fortune to him, supposing him to be the nearest relative—in fact, the last living one of the family. He further supposed that his grand-nephew, Robert Hardy, had died in Boston unmarried.

Graham learned that this was not true. Robert Hardy had left a son, Richard. He at once set about tracing him, for he felt that to Dick Hardy, and not to himself, belonged the Hardy fortune.

He visited Boston, but could secure no trace of the boy. Later he advertised. Mortimer Bluff wrote him; lengthy correspondence ensued; money was paid Bluff, but no Dick Hardy was produced; and, at last, believing Bluff to be a swindler, and Dick Hardy dead Lionel Graham had sailed, four months since, for Nuevitas, West Indies, taking all his wealth with him, and determining to use a large portion of it to civilize and convert some of the ignorant and savage natives there.

Two days previously, Warlock had received an urgent letter from Graham. He was at Nuevitas, and half minded to return to England; but the physician said he was in a precarious condition of health. "Come at once," he wrote to Warlock. "I think I cannot live long, and I wish you to take charge of my fortune and distribute it as I direct."

Now Dick Hardy had appeared. That placed a new construction on everything. Of course Graham, Warlock averred, would leave the money to him.

"I was just packing up to catch the first vessel for the West Indies—the *Bodega* sails at eight to-night—although it means ruin to my business to leave England just now. You must go, Richard Hardy. You came here to find Graham. You must go to Nuevitas at once, instead of me."

"Alone?" murmured Dudley, excitedly.

"Yes; why not? Show those papers to Graham, as you did to me; they are conclusive. I will write a letter to him. What say you? Quick! There is no time to lose."

"I will go," cried Dudley, radiant visions of wealth bewildering his mind, an ecstatic thrill of delirium permeating his frame, as he realized how easily he had deceived Warlock in his bold imposition.

The English lawyer hastened to his desk, wrote a letter, sealed it, and took up a wallet thick with bank notes.

"Have you plenty of money?" he asked, briskly, of Dudley.

"None, sir. I was shipwrecked, and lost all."

"True, I forget. That don't matter. Here, sign a receipt for five hundred pounds, and I'll charge it to Graham. Mr. Hardy," continued the lawyer, with an eye to future business, "should you at once succeed to all this enormous wealth, I would undertake to be your adviser, and aid you in judicious investments, as I have done for your relative, Mr. Graham."

"I won't forget you," replied Dudley, fairly a-tremble with joy, as he took the money Warlock proffered him. "I'd like to say one word to you, Mr. Warlock," he continued, shrewdly. "I told you I had enemies; one of them, a bold, bad boy on the same ship, tried to rob me. I foolishly told him my story, and I think he had an idea of coming here and representing that he was me."

"Let him come," chuckled Warlock. "I'll pop him into jail as soon as he does. Now then, seven o'clock. The *Bodega* sails in an hour. I'll call my lackey, John, and he'll see you safe on the vessel. Here's your letter to Graham. Don't forget that my services are at your disposal, Mr. Hardy, in the future."

"You bet I won't!" replied Dudley, forgetting dignity amid his delight.

Ten minutes later a stupid menial led him from the house, with many an excited message to Graham from the lawyer.

A square from the house Dudley Ralston paused suddenly and stared back at a passerby.

He was startled, but not alarmed, at recognizing a familiar form—the latter had not seen him. It was the real Dick Hardy, and, as Dudley little suspected, on his way to Marchmont Square.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE REAL DICK HARDY.

It was indeed Dan Knight, the real Dick Hardy, who had passed Dudley Ralston on his way to the *Bodega* with the lawyer's servant, and he still wore the disguise he had donned on board the steamer *Tripoli*.

Nothing had occurred since, with the Marshalls, he had left Troyle en route for London, by way of Liverpool, to afford Dick, our Dick Hardy, the coveted opportunity to reveal his real identity to Judge Marshall, and tell him the marvelous story of his adventures since leaving Brighton.

The carriage taken by the Marshalls was crowded. Dick and Ben were forced to ride in another, and when they arrived at London the judge ordered a conveyance, and, taking his sister and Alice with him, asked Ben and Dick to look after what little luggage they had accumulated since the wreck, and bring it to the Hyde Park Hotel. The judge's friends who had left Brighton with him had remained at Liverpool.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon, or about six hours after Dudley Ralston's arrival in London, when Dick reached that city. It took two hours to get the judge's luggage to the hotel. When they arrived, pretty Alice invited Dick to come to their rooms and see her aunt.

"Papa has gone away to the Exchange, where he expects letters from home," she told Dick. "He told me to ask you to be sure to wait for him. He wishes to see you and Mr. Arbuckle this evening without fail. Won't you come and wait for him—both of you?"

"I'll call this evening, Miss Marshall," said Dick, as he bowed himself from the scene, and thrilled at the grateful, kindly smile pretty Alice bestowed on him as she said:

"Do not fail, Mr. Knight. Papa expects you."

"I will not fail," murmured Dick, firmly. "I shall tell the judge everything to-night. I feel that he will believe me. I will show him the letter Dudley Ralston wrote proving that I am innocent of dissipation and theft at Brighton, and ask him to help me outwit Abner Mull in his effort to personate me. Perhaps I had better do a little investigating on my own hook first," reflected Dick, seriously. "I might visit this Honorable Lionel Graham and find out what I can. I must have got here before Mull did."

And Dick, not knowing of the accident to Mull and the imposition of Dudley Ralston, strolled around with Ben Arbuckle for an hour or more; and then, telling the bluff mariner that he would meet him at Judge Marshall's rooms at the hotel that evening, started out to find Marchmont Square.

They came. A servant admitted him. He was ushered into the same room where Dudley Ralston had been welcomed by the English lawyer. The latter, emptying his half-packed valises and trunks, stared at Dick suspiciously, as he asked to see Mr. Graham.

"What about?" demanded Warlock. "I'm Graham," he added, shrewdly recalling Dudley Ralston's allusion to possible impostors.

"Well, sir," said Dick, with some embarrassment, "I came to see what he knew about a certain Dick Hardy. You see——"

"What's your name?" interrupted the lawyer, sharply.

"That's my name. I am Richard Hardy. It's a singular story, sir. You see——"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when a strange thing occurred. The lawyer's face lit up with a grim smile. He dashed forward, seized the astonished Dick by the arm, hurried him to the open door of a closet, thrust him in, locked the door, and cried out:

"Yes, I see! Young man, you've come too late; I'm prepared for you. Dick Hardy! Ha, ha! that's good! We happen to know the real one, and were warned against you. You needn't squirm, and kick, and yell, for no one will pay any attention to you, and you can't break out. Dick Hardy! you're the bad boy who tried to rob our Dick."

Dick Hardy gasped for breath. He was too astounded to speak. He heard the lawyer's words, realized that Mull must have anticipated him in a visit, shrewdly warned against impostors, and paved the way for just such a reception for the real Dick or any false one who might be aware of his secret.

He heard the man excitedly call the servant.

"Mary, go for the police. No, hold on! Wait till John returns and I'll send him!" and then the man left the room, and Dick upbraided himself for his folly in not seeking Judge Marshall's advice ere he acted on the frail clues to Abner Mull's scheme that he possessed.

He tried the door. It was a stout oaken one, and resisted his every effort to force it. At the side, however, and set in the wall and looking out into a shabby garden at the side of the house, was a small window covered with a network of gauze for ventilation.

It was growing dark, but as Dick gazed, he noted the window was too small to admit of the exit of a human form. Then he stared wonderingly. The network and growing eventide obscured perfect vision, but he could plainly make out the outline of a form, that of a boy, seemingly, going through a strange and stealthy pantomime.

He wore a white skull-cap and a coat of bright bottle-green hue, and these made him appear decidedly grotesque. His face Dick could not make out. The stranger crept close under the window of the closet, reached the open one of the next room, gazed in, and then as footsteps sounded without, dodged down beneath the window.

The lawyer, Warlock, had returned to the apartment. Dick could make out another voice beside his own, and knew that he had a companion. He could hear the animated conversation that ensued.

"Well, John, did you get young Hardy to the vessel?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, sir, at the West Indies docks. Ship don't sail till ten though, sir. Delayed in loading."

"Very well. I suppose you know that he is Dick, the boy Mr. Graham sought for so long, and he's going to him at Nuevitas."

"Is he now, sir?" queried the stupid and wondering servant.

"Yes, he's had a hard time getting here, too—shipwrecks, enemies and robbery. He warned me of impostors and sure enough, just after you had left, in comes one of them—a boy calling himself Dick Hardy."

"Well, well, sir! you gave him a quietus, I'll guarantee, Mr. Warlock."

"Did I! He's locked in that closet yonder. You go for the police. I'll let him reflect on his chivalry in prison."

Dick Hardy groaned in dismay. He heard John leave the room. Then he knocked loudly on the door.

"Oh, sir! please, sir!" he cried, "one word!"

"Well, what is it?" demanded Warlock, approaching the door.

"You mistake, sir. I am no impostor. If you'll send for some of my friends, to the Hyde Park Hotel——"

"Nonsense! You can't fool me, nor trifle my time away. Not I! To jail you go. Tell the magistrate your story."

A bright idea occurred to Dick at that moment. He recalled something that he believed to be of great importance, that had occurred in Mortimer Bluff's office in New York City.

"I can prove that I am the real and only Dick Hardy!" he shouted out, excitedly. "Honest I can! Open the door and see."

There was a pause. Warlock, whom Dick now knew as not Mr. Graham, debated silently with himself whether he had better unlock the closet door or not. Finally he turned the key in the lock, opened the door slyly, and demanded in a suspicious tone of voice:

"Well, what is it?"

"See there, sir."

Dick Hardy, pulsating with emotion, had extended his arm. He had bared it to the elbow. Upon the smooth skin of the forearm was revealed that mysterious mark in dark blue outline that had caused the New York lawyer to identify him as one of the Hardys.



"See there!" cried Dick, excitedly. "That is a mark all the Hardy's bear, and——"

Warlock stared at it with no intelligent gleam in his eyes. He had never heard of it before.

Graham might know about it, but if he did, he had never referred to it to him.

"What's that?" he muttered.

"A mark——"

"Bosh! Never heard of it before."

"But I am positive that Mr. Graham, or whoever wants to find the real Dick Hardy, does, sir."

"Even if he does, it's easy to put that on your arm. Stand back! you can't fool me. You're a rascally impostor, and——"

Dick Hardy was driven to the verge of desperation. He decided to escape. With a rush he dashed the door open, and sent the lawyer reeling backward at the force and suddenness of the unexpected movement.

"Stop, stop! help, police!"

But Dick was at the window, and over the sill ere Warlock could catch or detain him.

"Oh-h-h! murder! I'm killed!"

Dick Hardy had landed on some skulking form under the window. It was the boy he had seen there from the closet window a few minutes previous; but he had forgotten all about him.

The tones sounded strikingly familiar, but amid the excitement Dick did not delay to urge further recognition. He saw the boy roll on the ground, and then spring to his feet, limp to the front entrance and hasten away; while he himself scaled a rear brick

wall, dropped to a paved court, and dashed at full speed in the direction of the Hyde Park Hotel.

He reached the hotel and ascended the stairs to the floor where Judge Marshall's rooms were located.

He knocked at the door of one of them. There was a pause. Then it opened. A chambermaid, putting the apartment in order, alone occupied the room. She stared wonderingly at Dick.

"Judge Marshall and his family—the gentleman and ladies who were here?" stammered Dick, vaguely surprised and incoherent.

"Oh, they're gone!" replied the girl, simply.

"Gone! When—where?"

"An hour since; to the steamship dock."

Dick Hardy thrilled to deep dismay.

"Was there a man with them, an old sailor," he asked, quivering.

"Yes. Ben, I heard them call him. They had to sail right back to America. Some trouble there, they said. He's gone, too."

Dick Hardy recoiled aghast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALONE IN LONDON.

Dick Hardy sank to a chair near the door, too overcome to speak for some moments, and the housemaid stared at him in wonderment.

"Were they friends, sir?" she finally asked. "Have they left you behind?"

"Yes—no. Where have they gone? What is that—a telegram? Was this to him?" and the incoherent and overwhelmed Dick sprang to a table on which lay some scraps of paper picked up by the maid, and eagerly scanned one of them.

It was a cablegram, dated New York, and it explained everything. It was several days old, but had evidently been received that day at the Exchange by Judge Marshall. The latter, in careless haste, had left it in the room, and Dick perused it in excitement.

It ran:

"Terraberto, the manager of the Buena Vista plantations, has absconded with shipment money and pay sent for workmen. The property will be desolated, as the natives are vengeful and enraged; unless your personal presence and cash to mollify them is insured. Sail at once or send instructions."

The dispatch was signed by a New York firm of bankers, with whom Judge Marshall had done business for years. Dick knew that nearly all his means were invested in an extensive sugar plantation in the West Indies, and that from it he derived his large income.

The cablegram had alarmed the judge. He had determined to hasten to the West Indies at once, and endeavor to retrieve the fortunes imperiled by his rascally defaulting superintendent and evolve order from chaos. An opportunity to sail at once had doubtlessly offered, reasoned Dick quickly, and the judge had sailed taking Ben Arbuckle with him.

"Maybe they left some word for you at the office," suggested the maid, and Dick, hopeful that he might be able to learn to what wharf the Marshalls had gone, and overtake them, was down the stairs in a flash.

Yes, there was a message for him, and as he spoke the name Dan Knight, the hotel clerk handed him a bulky envelope.

A cry of surprise broke from Dick's lips, as from a hastily written scrawl, in Judge Marshall's handwriting, there fell out four fifty-pound notes.

Dick thrust them carelessly into his pocket and suspensefully perused the letter, which read:

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND: We have waited for you in the hopes of your return until the last moment. Trouble at my plantation in the West Indies has demanded that I forego a sojourn in London, and contemplated trip on the Continent. Your friend, Ben Arbuckle, has found a friend who sails at once with his ship the *Evening Star* for Caicos, and as haste is imperative, we leave in an hour.

"I hoped to have seen you to do something substantial for you. Your bravery and fidelity have meant much to me. I believe a boy of your sterling worth will succeed anywhere, but if the inclosed trifle should not afford you a fair start in life in London, write me at Caicos, which is near my Buena Vista plantation, and I will be glad to aid you in any way I can. My daughter joins in an expression of earnest regard. Gratefully yours,

"THOMAS MARSHALL."

"Hurrah!" cried Dick with sudden energy, as he sprang to his feet as if from an electric shock. "Why, what a noodle I am. Abner Mull sails from this wharf to-night, although I don't know on what ship, for Nuevitas. There is the man I must see, the Honorable Lionel Graham. Why should I remain here? Suppose I get there first. Judge Marshall, too, is going to the West Indies; probably I could find him. I have money. I'll go to the West Indies; I'll secure passage in the very first ship I find."

The clear prospect encouraged Dick. He paused only for a moment; it was to take out his own little stock of money, and that the judge had left for him, and put it securely in his pocket-book.

"I wonder what it will cost to go to Nuevitas?" he mused, as he folded the last crisp bank bill away.

Dick started back as a shadow fell between him and the lamp-post. Then he uttered a cry of alarm.

Two rough-looking men, with eyes greedily fixed on the pocket-book, had stridden to his side.

"Grab it, Jem!"

"I've got it. Chuck him over the dock timbers."

Dick Hardy was treated so roughly and quickly to a backward push into a cavity, where the wharf planks were broken, that the cry for help was drowned in a wail of pain, as he landed on a pile of stones and wood, badly bruised.

He clambered to the dock again. The men had disappeared. He glanced wildly about him, his heart like lead, as he realized his new disaster.

"No use," he almost wailed as he limped to a pile of barrels. "They're gone, and I can never find them or the money. Oh, how foolish I was!"

He buried his face in his hands in despair, and the tears trickled through his fingers, stanch-hearted as he was, from the pain of his bruises and mortification over his loss. He lifted his pale face finally as he heard voices, and, looking up, he saw two sailors standing near him.

"Going on yonder craft, eh, Jack?" spoke one in an inquiring tone of voice.

"Right you are."

"When do you sail?"

"Afore midnight."

"Where bound?"

"Nuevitas, West Indies. The stevedores will soon be here, and we'll finish the cargo and leave."

"A last smoke and a drop of comfort afore you go. What say you? Come along."

"All right."

Dick struggled painfully to his feet and stared, with a new, grim expression on his face, first after the retiring men, and then at the vessel they had indicated.

It lay moored at the edge of the wharf, less than one hundred feet distant. There were lights in the cabin, but no one was on deck. Dick advanced toward the vessel.

"Sails for Nuevitas to-night," he murmured.

The hatches were open. Never was a fairer opportunity presented for a stowaway. He looked all around, and climbed over the rail of the ship and trod its deck, and advanced to an open hatchway.

A lantern burned below. The hold was not more than a third full of boxes, bales and barrels of merchandise. Dick paused, irresolute. Just then he heard the cabin door open. That decided him. He stepped over the hatchway railing, and seized the notched post leading into the hold, descended it, picked up the lantern standing on a box, and proceeded toward the bow of the vessel, seeking some cosy nook where he could hide until the ship was out at sea.

As he came to a row of boxes breast high, and clambered to them, he flashed the lantern beyond. Below was a space unhampered by merchandise—a cosy nook not likely to be visited by any of the crew ere the ship sailed.

He mused and listened, but thought soon grew vague, hearing obscure. His fall made him feel stupid; the swinging motion of the ship was conducive to slumber. Before he knew it, Dick Hardy was asleep.

He awoke with a curious sensation of confusion and distress. His throat was parched, his limbs cramped and stiff, his head dizzy and aching.

The vessel had a regular swaying motion, describing a sweep from side to side that told of a swell of wave only met with on a large body of water.

"Afloat, and on the ocean, sure!" muttered Dick. "My, how dark it is. I wonder if I dare show myself yet. I'm just dying of thirst."

He arose to his feet and steadied himself against the row of boxes over which he had clambered the night previous.

He locked fingers and toes between the interstices of the boxes as he clambered upward. Up and up it was, beyond the barrier of the night previous, yet no break in the cargo came.

His head struck a timber overhead finally.

"Why!" ejaculated Dick, in some wonder and dismay. "It's the top of the hold, and—"

He was thrilled to horror at a new discovery. He groped in his pocket for a match, clinging to the top row of boxes with one hand. He flashed the lucifer.

It flared and went out. His own gasping breath extinguished it, for the momentary illumination showed before him a solid wall of merchandise, packed tight.

While he slept the hold had been filled. On all sides he was hemmed in. There was no access to hatchway or deck.

CHAPTER XXV.

A STRANGE VOYAGE.

Dick was weak and nerveless as he dropped, rather than clambered to the floor of the hold and sank back against the slanting side of the hull, and tried to regain composure and courage to meet the emergency of the moment.

Darkness intensified the terror of the situation. A single gleam of hope came into Dick's soul as he thought of the rapidly occurring incidents of the evening previous.

"The lantern!" he gasped suddenly.

He aroused himself from the lethargy of despair, and groped about the place. His fingers grasped the lantern. In his pocket

were perhaps ten matches. He must be saving of them, and he selected a splintered lucifer, ignited it, and lit the lantern.

Its rays chased away the gloom of the cubby-hole that had become unexpectedly a prison to him, but a quick glance around revealed no hint of escape.

On three sides, and overhead, and beneath, were the stout, impenetrable timbers of the ship. Toward the stern, deck-high, loomed a wall of closely packed boxes, barrels and bales.

The vessel was swaying forcibly, but the action did not budge a single package, indicating that the cargo had been laid with care and precision.

Dick took out his pocket-knife and made a casual inspection of the wall of merchandise. The lower tier was of heavy board boxes. On one of them he read a direction and the words "steel scythe blades." He did not try therefore to penetrate the boards.

Next came some wire-fastened bales, broad and compact. Dick ran his knife blade through the canvas covering, and holding the lantern found that they contained waterproof rubber cloth for tents and clothing.

This was discouraging; but he tapped on the next row of small boxes above the bales with more hope. There was no mark to indicate what the contents might be.

"I'll have to cut into one of them," decided Dick, and he set to work. It took him half an hour to chip a square block out of the white wood end of one of the boxes. As it came free the rays of the lantern fell on a bright round metallic surface. Dick eagerly drew forth a tin can. The box was filled with other cans like it.

"Cherries!" he cried, as he read the name of an illuminated label. "Canned fruit; my, the swish of the liquor crazes me."

He cut through the tin top. A red thin liquor oozed out. He applied his lips to the jagged orifice.

Dick ate some of the cherries, and proceeded to empty the box of the remainder of the cans. They were all the same—cherries. The remainder of the tier probably contained other fruit, but he did not investigate it just then, for as he drew out the last can, the empty box moved with it, and he tugged at it, pulled it out, threw it to the floor, and lifting the lantern peered beyond the aperture it had filled.

There was no open space beyond, as he had half hoped.

Another box showed, but this one was marked, and as he read the label, "crackers," he uttered a cry of delight, and was soon reaching through the hole, and hacking at it to penetrate the interior.

If they were bank bills instead of crisp crackers, Dick could not have thrilled more joyfully at the contact, as he seized a handful of the contents of the second box he had cut into.

They satisfied him for the present. He cut open a second can of fruit, sipped its liquor, devoured the crackers, and enjoyed the meal, seated on the floor of the hold, to the exclusion of every other subject for the time being.

Five minutes later Dick removed all the crackers from the box, and discovering that to pull its sides and top away would not weaken the integrity of the general mass of boxes and bring them crashing down on him in a heap, he began to cut and break it up.

He had just dragged the last side loose when a startling sound enchaind his attention, and in doubt, wonder, and expectation, Dick Hardy paused halfway in the aperture, and listened excitedly.

A moan penetrated the place. It was followed by a jumbled mass of words—vague, incoherent, as if spoken in sleep by some restless slumberer.

They were human tones. As they were repeated, Dick Hardy could scarcely contain himself for joy in the sudden awakened hope that some one else was in the hold besides himself, that there was a possibility of companionship in his strange isolation under the decks of the West Indian vessel.

He tugged at the wedged-in remnants of the cracker box, and fell back into the cubby-hole with the force of the effort.

"Hello!" ejaculated Dick in dismay, "the lantern has gone out."

His body had blocked up the aperture, excluding the light, the extinguishing of which he had not noticed until that moment. The oil had become exhausted and when he lit the wick it flared and flickered and went out again immediately.

Dick took out two matches, held them in his palm, and climbed into the aperture formed by the removal of the fruit and cracker boxes.

As he got beyond the limit of the space recently occupied by the latter, he reached out his hand. Vacancy beyond! The wall of merchandise had a break there, sure.

"Hello, hello!" called out Dick, suspensefully, "is some one there?"

From below there seemed to issue a rustling, moaning sound. Dick, in deep suspense, struck a match and held it forward.

A space, surrounded, like his own place of retreat by merchandise, showed about four feet square. Some boxes from the opposite side had been pulled down and some burst open. Almost within the reach of his hand lay one of these, and as Dick noticed that its outspread contents were candles, he wriggled further through the aperture, and just as the match went out grasped one of them.

He had it lit with the second match in a minute. The puffing wick spluttered and then steadied down to a regular glow of flame. Dick held it from him and looked down.

His excited eyes glowed like two beads of fire as he scanned the disordered space; upon the floor of the hold lay a prostrate figure. In blank amazement Dick Hardy stared at it.

It was that of a human being—a boy like himself. The face was turned away from him, but he saw with a start of marveling amazement a bright, bottle-green coat and a white skull-cap, and—

"Why, it's the boy I saw sneaking under the windows at the house in Marchmont Square!" gasped the bewildered Dick, "the one I jumped on. Say, say, wake up, if you're asleep—look up, if you're awake."

"Water, water! I'm dying, I tell you!" and then a terrible shriek proceeded from the form below, evidently convulsed with some frightful nightmare.

Dick reached the pile of loose candles, seized one of them, and threw it at the prostrate figure.

"Wake up!" he again shouted. "If you're hungry and thirsty, I'll fix you. Who are you? Wake up! wake—"

This time the projectile and Dick's cries produced the desired effect.

The figure moved restively, a groan issued from the sleeper's lips, he struggled to a sitting posture, arose unsteadily, and blinked at the light.

"Abner Mull!" broke in a gasping, incredulous aspiration from Dick Hardy's marveling lips.

CHAPTER XXVI.

STOWAWAYS.

It was indeed Abner Mull—pale, wretched, forlorn—almost dead with nausea, hunger and thirst, whom the wondering Dick Hardy had so singularly discovered in the hold; and his being

there was a plausible sequence to the plot that had led him to England, only to run against a counterplotter who had robbed him, impersonated him, and driven him to hasty action which had resulted in his being, like Dick, a stowaway.

To Dick, who had all along believed, incorrectly, that Mull was the Dick Hardy accepted as the real one by the lawyer, Warlock, and sent to the Honorable Lionel Graham at Nuevitas by him, the present discovery was all the more mystifying.

Instantly his quick mind scented a mystery, for he had seen the bottle-green coat boy lurking in the Marchmont Square garden while the lawyer was telling of Dick Hardy just having gone to the West Indies docks; and the bottle-green coat boy being certainly Mull, it could not be the latter who had successfully imposed upon Warlock as the genuine and only Richard Hardy.

"Are you strong enough to climb through?" asked Dick at length.

"I—I'll try."

"Do it, and there's food and drink here."

"Oh, my! Water, water! I'd crawl through fire for one drop"—scramble, scramble, and a form crawled through the tunnel and dropped on the floor, and Abner Mull, his eyes glassy, his face fierce and famished-looking, fairly sprung at the opened can of cherries that Dick Hardy proffered him, without so much as glancing at his benefactor, and drained the liquid as if it was sparkling nectar.

Dick Hardy stood watching the wretched stowaway with a look half pitying and half stern, as he bolted food and drink as if he had been given a limited space of time in which he might gorge all he could.

That busy brain of his had directed and formulated a method of procedure with the wicked boy who had indirectly caused him so much trouble, and Dick had put on the goggles he had worn on the *Tripoli*; but abandoned since being in the hold of the merchantman, and drew his cap well down over his eyes, and prepared to question and deal with Mull in the character of Dan Knight.

Mull, with a sigh of relief, devoured the last can of cherries open, and looked hungrily about for more.

"Hold on!" ordered Dick, "leave those boxes alone. You've had enough for the present. You'll kill yourself with over-feeding if you ain't careful."

"Kill myself," replied Mull, in a whining tone. "I couldn't fill up if I ate the whole cargo here. I haven't had a morsel since I came aboard, except the candles. Ugh! I ate half of one. Oh, my, but it sickened me. Hello!"

Abner Mull chanced to glance at his benefactor just then for the first time. He shrank back, and his jaws fell. In consternation and amazement he stared at Dick.

"It—ain't—you?" he muttered slowly and incredulously.

"Yes, it's me," replied Dick, sharply. "Do you recognize me?"

"Do I? You're the boy from the *Tripoli* that blocked Dudley Ralston's game, running away with the judge's daughter, and——"

"And yours, too," interrupted Dick, impatiently. "See here, I've saved your life."

"You have, for a fact."

"And I want something of you. Information. Now, then, Hardy, I believe you call yourself Dick Hardy?"

"That's my name!" asserted Mull, with all his old-time effrontery; "but how came you here? I thought——"

"Never mind what you thought. How came you here? Where's Ralston?"

For the first time in his life, perhaps, Abner Mull told a straight story.

He told Dick that he was on his way to London with valuable papers proving him to be Richard Hardy, the orphan heir to a vast fortune; and he related how he and Dudley Ralston, after leaving Troyle, walked toward Doldregha. When, as the reader knows, Mull fell over the cliff in an attempt to rescue his imperiled companion, he was precipitated to a ledge far below.

There he lay, stunned and bruised, until morning. He managed to reach the valley and the town. Here he got a track of Dudley Ralston, who had just left on the steamer for Liverpool. Ralston was wearing his coat, spending his money freely, and as he had not alluded to the villagers to the accident of the night previous, and as he had registered as Richard Hardy at the hotel, Mull at once stumbled upon a natural conclusion—Ralston had abandoned him as dead, had assumed his name, appropriated his money, and, taking advantage of what Mull had told him, and what the papers in the coat revealed, intended going to London and personating him to inherit the great Hardy fortune.

"I begged, stole, worked my way to London," continued Mull, excitedly. "The man I was to see was a Mr. Graham. I happened at his house just in time to see Dudley Ralston leave it. I hung around. He'd done it! I listened at a window. My cake was dough. He had assumed my name, and warned the lawyer there about impostors, and some one tried the same game later; who, I dunno, for I didn't see him, but the lawyer locked him up and was going to jail him, but he escaped and nearly killed me, jumping through the window on me."

Dick smiled secretly at the familiar recital.

"And then?" he asked, curiously, at last comprehending the mystery of the affair that had puzzled him so greatly.

"Then I says, 'Mull'—I mean 'Hardy'—to myself, 'you're doomed. If you go to the lawyer, you'll be arrested, too. Ralston has the papers, and has been sent to Graham at Nuevitas to get his fortune.' I decided to follow. I had no money. I knew if I raised a row before he sailed or on the boat, he'd have me arrested, so I stole aboard this boat bound for Nuevitas, got into the hold, and when they began loading I was crowded back and back into the hold, and didn't dare to cry out or try to escape. I reckon I've been in here three days and nights. I crept into that place yonder over some boxes, and found the candles and ate some. Ugh! it almost killed me. Here I am, and gone up, only for you. Say, you're a brick, Knight, and I'll reward you when we get to Nuevitas; but how came you here?"

"What are you going to do when you get to Nuevitas?" asked Dick, disregarding Mull's last question.

Abner Mull's eyes danced diabolically.

"Wait and see," he cried. "I'll just exactly get Dudley Ralston into a row that will settle him. I'll find Graham, tell him everything, and—— Oh, the thieving scoundrel, I'll get even with Ralston for all the trouble he's caused me."

"I say I guess not, Abner Mull!"

"Ab-ner Mull——"

It would be impossible to depict the schemer's expression of face as Dick Hardy boldly designated him by his right name.

"You are startled, eh?" pursued Dick, calmly. "I'll startle you more in a minute. Is Dudley Ralston aboard this ship?"

"This is the *Bodega*—yes," gasped Mull, vacantly; "but, Mull—you call me Mull. I'm all flustered. I—I——"

"Don't flounder, Mull. I know all. Dudley Ralston is a rascal because he stole your papers; you are another because you stole them from me. Look at me, Mull! Abner Mull, Mortimer Bluff's gifted clerk and accomplice, who am I?"

Dick Hardy pulled off cap and goggles and held the candle directly before his face.

In petrified bewilderment Mull stared. Line by line the real countenance of the boy he had known as Dan Knight assumed the form and substance of familiarity to his startled vision.

"Gosh, I'm beat! It's the real, the genuine, the Dick Hardy!" gasped the thunderstruck Mull. "I give in, I'm in a dream, I—"

"Stop!" cried Dick Hardy, spiritedly, "I will explain the situation in one word. You agree here and now to do as I say, to help me unmask the boy who has punished you justly, as you both have me unjustly, or, as soon as we reach the deck of this vessel, and it touches land, you exchange the hold here for a cell in a jail. Take your choice, Abner Mull, friend or foe, we are even odds at last, all three of us, in the race for the Hardy fortune."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CAST ADRIFT.

"Ghosts!"

"Right you are—I said it. Ghosts, spirits—"

"Yes, in the rum cask."

"No, in the hold."

"Your topsail's awry, Jack."

"Too much rum, mate."

"Oh, come off the perch!"

The scene was the deck of the *Bodega*, West Indies merchantman, and the last speaker was Dudley Ralston, pert and conceited as ever, and imagining his city slang to be fully up to the technical criticisms of the half-dozen sailors gathered around Jack Dover, boatswain of the vessel.

The good-natured mariners laughed incredulously, and Dudley tapped honest Jack's forehead with owl-like pity, but the boatswain's serious face was imperturbable.

"Jeer and joke," he muttered, "but wait and see. I say the ship's haunted, and I know it. You'll know it too before the voyage's ended. Look out for a flying Dutchman, mates, and then for a leak or wreck, mark my words," and Jack Dover walked away with an injured air, leaving Dudley and the others to laugh over what they termed his vagaries.

Dudley Ralston was in his element. It was now three weeks since he had left London, and under favoring auspices, and with high heart and hope for the glorious promises of the near future.

He had the best accommodations the vessel afforded, and the locker containing cigars and wines was placed at the disposal of his generous purse whenever he listed. The voyage was a pleasant one, and fair weather and favoring winds had, three weeks out of port, drifted the *Bodega* toward the island coast of South America.

The incident that begins this chapter had entirely passed from Dudley Ralston's mind before the day of its occurrence was gone, but that evening as he stood watching a bank of dark red clouds on the northern horizon, that the mate predicted promised a storm before morning, it was forcibly recalled to Dudley's thoughts, as the boatswain, Jack Dover, came to where he was, a serious look on his wise old face and a mysterious accent in his tones.

"Say, lad," remarked Dover, turning back suddenly and producing a greasy wallet, and selecting a bank note, "I take you up."

Dudley looked perplexed.

"Take me up?" he replied, vaguely.

"Yes."

"What about?"

"The bet. You offered to wager that I didn't hear any groans

and warnings in the hold, that it was too much rum or the rats. Well, I went down again to see that the pumps were in order a little while ago, and I heard the same strange noises. Ghosts!" whispered Jack, earnestly. "You can hear them, too. Cover the bet, and see."

Dudley laughed. Any incident to vary the monotony of the voyage was hailed gladly. He placed a bank note in Jack's hand and said:

"That's yours if I hear the ghosts. Come ahead."

Jack lighted a lantern, and led the way to the hatch. He opened it and descended. Then he went to where the forward cargo began and whispered:

"Sit down on this box and listen."

There was a brief space of silence.

Dudley Ralston paused and bent his ear intently, and the scoffing smile faded from his face.

Distinctly upon his amazed hearing came the low murmur of voices from the forward part of the hold.

"Be careful, Mull; we may be overheard."

"Don't be afraid, Hardy—Knight, I mean. Drat me if I can keep track of the two names. You see, there's a space beyond here."

"Yes."

"And that last row of boxes are right to the hatchway. I know it. We've nearly dug our way out. Shall we drop here, and work ahead to-morrow?"

"Yes," replied the first voice. "We must be near the end of the voyage, but we must also be careful, Mull. Dudley Ralston is a bold schemer; he has money, influence and friends, and our story wouldn't be believed. We can only wait until the ship reaches land, steal away, and get to Mr. Graham first."

"You're the boss, Hardy," came the reply, "but if I had my way, I'd just exactly venture on deck, locate that rascally Ralston, hook the papers he has, and then we're safe, sure. See here, Hardy, you're going to be square and liberal with me when you get the fortune?"

"I'll do what is right if you help me. Yes. Hist! I believe I caught the glimmer of a light just then."

He had; the lantern fairly trembled in the hand of the marveling, alarmed Dudley Ralston. He was pale as death as he staggered to the hatchway, ascended to the deck, sank to a pile of ropes, and sat there staring at vacancy, too stunned by the terribly startling developments of the hour, to speak or move.

Dudley Ralston had heard enough to warn that suspicious mind of the truth, to cause the fabric he had reared so carefully to shiver to its frail foundation, as if menaced by sure and sudden collapse.

He tried to evolve a plausible theory as to the cause of the presence of the two boys in the hold of the *Bodega*, whom he now knew to be to a certainty his companion and rival of the *Tripoli*, the pretended Dick Hardy, alias Abner Mull, and the rescued castaway, the real Dick Hardy, alias Dan Knight.

Dudley Ralston paced the deck of the merchantman, strangely unsocial and gruff to the sailors, until nearly midnight. He examined the hatchway, he viewed the small boats at the stern, he closely scrutinized the watch, and as he saw that a Spaniard named Mercal, was on duty after, his face looked complacent.

Mercal was a foxy-eyed, covetous fellow, with whom Dudley enjoyed playing cards from the true gambling zest the former threw into the vice.

"On watch, Mercal?" he said.

"Yes, till four bells aft. I'm thinking we'll have a storm by morning. Thanks, señor, a cigar."

"Say, Mercal," said Dudley, insinuatingly, as they lit cigars, "when do we reach Nuevitas?"

"Two, three days."

"Mercal, you like money?"

The Spaniard's eyes snapped covetously.

"Yes, as señor knows."

"I have a hundred-pound note in my pocket for you."

"For me?" responded Mercal, excitedly

"Yes."

"For what?"

"I have enemies. This night I discovered them on board the boat. They are two boys, stowaways. Hist! let no one hear us. I trust only you."

It was an hour later when Dudley Ralston had, by misrepresentation and bribery, won the Spaniard to his plans.

He told him what he wished to do.

The boys were in the hold. The removal of a tier of boxes would reach them. They were to be carried to one of the small boats and sent adrift.

Mercal had some chloroform. He could drug them, and no one would be the wiser for the removal.

Mercal was fortunate. Carefully removing a tier of boxes he found the boys asleep beneath.

The Spaniard applied a handkerchief saturated in chloroform to their faces. One at a time he lifted them, gained the dack, and then the boat was lowered to the wake of the vessel astern. Dudley Ralston was entertaining the other three of the watch behind the forecastle.

In the teeth of a rising storm, the yawl was floating rapidly into the gathering darkness of the night.

Two insensible forms lay prostrate in the boat. Dick Hardy and Abner Mull, all unconscious of the new change in their destinies, at the will of an unscrupulous enemy, had been cast adrift.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEARING THE GOAL.

Three days later, after scudding many leagues before a fierce, blustering northeaster, with bare sails, the *Bodega* sailed into harbor at Nuevitas.

The disappearance of the yawl was attributed to the storm. It had broken its gearing, the captain theorized, and had drifted away.

Dudley Ralston stepped ashore, with an eager heart and high, elated hopes. He treated the crew royally at the nearest tavern, "braced up," as he termed it, for the expected interview with the man he had sailed many thousand miles to see, and then, between smoking cigars and devouring cloves, to disguise his wine-tainted breath, he made his way to the principal hotel of the place.

Lord Graham he found the Honorable Lionel Graham to be termed by those who knew him, and a single inquiry of the clerk at the hotel put him on the trail of the legatee of the Hardy fortune.

"Lord Graham gave up his apartments at the hotel here a day or two since, and moved to that little house you see yonder, near the seashore," said the clerk. "He is ill, and the physicians ordered the ocean breeze and seclusion. From England, eh?"

"Yes," replied Dudley.

"Lord Graham expected friends by every steamer. Yes, you'll find him at the little house near the cliffs, señor."

Dudley reached the picturesque spot indicated a few minutes later. It was beautifully located, and, with its luxuriant stretch of cool, shady grove, and sweet-scented garden, and bamboo

thatched roofs, extending far over broad piazzas, it took his fancy immensely, and he did not disturb a slumbering negro in a chair at the front door, but walked around to the side of the building, where he observed a man, in *negligée* costume, half reclining, in a hammock swing.

The man looked sad, and old, and ill, and, at a covert glance, Dudley decided that he was the object of his search.

"It's Graham," he muttered. "I'll tackle him alone," and he advanced up the steps of the piazza. The recumbent man started nervously at his footfall, and stared at the newcomer curiously.

"Are you Lord Graham?" asked Dudley, removing his hat, and assuming his politest manner.

"I am Mr. Graham," smiled the other, gently. "They make dukes of squires and generals of sergeants in this place of extravagant notions. I have the honor of knowing—"

"I come from England," replied Dudley. "I bring a message from Mr. Warlock."

"Home!" cried Graham, his pale face lighting up with excitement and joy. "Ah, how welcome is a word from my native land! Excuse me, sir, but I am an invalid, and cannot arise readily. Then my friend, Warlock, did not come himself?" murmured Mr. Graham, in tones of anxiety and disappointment.

"There was no occasion, sir," replied Dudley; "he sent me instead. I came from America to see you, Mr. Graham. I am, I—do not be surprised or startled, sir—I am Dick Hardy!"

The announcement had a marvelous effect on the invalid. His face flushed with joy; he leaned forward, seizing both of Dudley's hands, and his own fairly trembled as he peered earnestly into the face of his visitor.

"I must get well now, my boy," he said, affectionately, pressing Dudley's hand. "A bright, handsome, ambitious boy to care for. Ah, it makes me young again! We will return to London as soon as I am able. You know why I sought you?"

"To—to befriend—to adopt me, sir?" queried Dudley, with an assumed innocence and candor that completely hoodwinked and charmed Graham.

"Yes; and to make you heir to my fortune. Rightfully yours, dear boy. I have failed in my missionary scheme here. I fear I trusted too entirely to native honesty. I gave you up as dead, and determined to dispose of the fortune I had in benevolence. I selected the degraded natives of Puerto Limos, on the coast, and had almost all my immense fortune in ready money in my possession. Those I befriended told others. Some rascals learned that I possessed a large amount of cash. They started to rob me, and I was forced to flee alone in a rowboat, or I would have been murdered. They pursued me until I reached the Tampico Keys, a bunch of sterile islands, many miles south of here. There my boat struck a rock, and it sank. I crawled ashore, secreted the lacquered box that contained the money, and hid in the thickets."

"All that money!" murmured Dudley, suspensefully. "You didn't lose it, sir?"

"No, but I nearly lost my life, and, as it was, took a cold from the exposure, that has disabled me since. I swam and waded from island to island, trying to evade the thieves who sought me persistently. Just as I fainted from sheer exhaustion on the shore of one of the little islands, the crew of a steamer stopped there for water, and discovered me. I was taken on board, and reached Nuevitas in a high fever, luckily being recognized by friends here who cared for me."

"And you left the money behind?" ejaculated Dudley, with a thrill of dread and disappointment.

"I had to. I was insensible when they sailed from the island. But it is safe, for I hid it securely."

blinding spray prevented Dick from discovering what had really occurred, but he knew that the yawl had struck something. His first movement was to seize Mull's arm. Then the yawl seemed to crash to splinters, careened, and sunk from beneath them.

"Grab that!" yelled Dick, as they were flung into the water, and a dark object grazed his arm. "It's a raft, or a floating hull. Don't pull so; you drag me down. Climb up, climb up!"

An exciting experience ensued. It seemed that some heavy, floating wooden object had struck the yawl, and upon it Dick clambered, dragging the terrified Mull after him.

"It's a raft—ship timbers!" gasped Dick.

"I can't hold on!" shrieked Mull. "My fingers are numb and trembling so."

Dick seized a stake driven between two pieces of timber, joined together with stout ropes, with one hand, and clung to Mull with the other.

It was a grim clutch, with shut eyes and anxious heart, for the next two hours. Any moment, it seemed, the raft, if such it was, might overturn or go to pieces, and time and again it jarred and swung in a circling eddy, as it came in contact with some passing object.

"Rocks," reflected Dick, "or pieces of a wreck; some one made this raft and was swept overboard. Gracious, we are lost!"

With a thundering crash, the raft had struck an object looming up just ahead. Its fragments and the boys were instantly precipitated into a boiling swirl of waters. Dick, clutching Mull, struck out mechanically, grasped a rock in the surf, made out the outline of a coast, and, as a wave swept them inland, he struggled to his feet, and dragged Mull to what appeared to be a shingly shore.

"Safe!" he cried, wildly. "Mull, we're on land! Oh, how thankful I am! Can't you walk, or help yourself?"

The beach was strewn with boxes, etc., evidently washed in from some recent wreck. One box of biscuits was found.

That was all, however, of an edible character that was found. The last box investigated made Dick's eyes open wide. It was filled with boxes, vials, and packages.

"A ship's medicine chest," he said. "There's been a big wreck near here, and very lately. Mercy, the *Evening Star*!"

Dick Hardy recoiled, with a violent start. The discovery he had made momentarily overwhelmed him. He had just read, painted on the reverse side of the medicine chest, the name of the ship to which it belonged.

"It's the vessel the Marshalls sailed away on!" he choked out. "Oh, they cannot be lost! This is terrible! Perhaps they, like us, have been driven here. Mull," he said, glancing eagerly at the dots of islands lying to the south, "can you swim?"

"Some," mumbled Mull, his mouth chock full of the biscuits.

"Then stow away all the biscuits you can, and come along. We've got to find water, and that big, green island over yonder is not very far away, and we might find some there."

Dick's main idea, however, was to endeavor to learn if others than themselves had not been cast away on some of the numerous islands that dotted the sea for miles.

The water between the islands was shallow. A sparkling spring was discovered as soon as they landed on the large island. Here they remained until the next morning.

"Drink your fill, and we'll swim to the next one," said Dick, toward noon. "We may discover some house or settlement."

"Not much," grunted Mull.

"Why not?"

"Leave well enough alone. Here's water and food. I'm done out swimming."

"Then wait here; I'm going to investigate," announced Dick, a little testily.

He went to the extreme end of the island, and scanned the expanse stretched beyond. A few hundred yards distant was a rocky island, and at which he stared and stared, trying to make out a vapor or mist that ascended from its extreme end.

"It's smoke!" cried Dick, excitedly. "I'm sure of it. Some one must be there. Here goes!"

He was an expert swimmer, and soon reached his destination. Then he hurried down the sandy beach, near the rocks, and at a sharp turn he drew back, with a startled exclamation, and held to the rock, as if overwhelmed at some discovery.

Then Dick Hardy did a strange thing. It was to grope in his pocket and draw forth the same pair of goggles he had worn on the steamer *Tripoli*.

He acted on a thought that would not have come to most boys under similar circumstances, but Dick was an unusually shrewd boy, the reader will agree.

He sprang around the jutting rock now, with a bound and an excited cry:

"Judge Marshall, you here! Don't you know me?"

"Dan Knight!"

A curious picture was revealed. A pile of brush blazed and smoked, a signal fire on the beach. On a tarpaulin lay Alice Marshall, her face white as marble, her form motionless, as if in death, her eyes closed.

Standing near her, his face drawn with fervent anxiety and pain, was her father.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FORTUNE IN PERIL.

"A ship—a steamer—we are saved!"

Dick Hardy uttered these words, in tones of ringing delight, and riveted his glance on the ocean, crested with the radiance of the most glowing moonlight he had ever seen.

It was the evening of the day after his discovery of the Marshalls, and he had just swam from the island upon which he had discovered them to the one where he had left Abner Mull the previous day, when he paused, and, glancing seaward, made the discovery his glad tones now announced.

Yes, not far out was a trim steamer, a trail of sparks and smoke extending east, its prow directed straight toward the bright signal fire which had been kept burning by Judge Marshall.

It was just after dusk, and, as he was on his way to find Mull, that Dick Hardy discovered the steamer, and knew that the signal fire on the beach had been seen from its deck.

Dick ran down the shore of the large island in quest of his companion of the day previous. Mull was, however, nowhere in sight, and Dick was about to loudly shout his name, when he came to an abrupt halt, and, half screened by some bushes, peered with astonished eyes at a spot on the white beach where the moonlight shone bright as day.

Dick Hardy had known many surprises of late, but never in his life had he been so amazed as at that moment.

He could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses. Plainly revealed on the sand, stood a boy he had last seen at Troyle—the marplot of his early boyish destiny, the scheming friend of Abner Mull—

Dudley Ralston!

"It ain't him—it is him—I'm asleep! No, I ain't. He's here, too! I won't call out. I'll watch him. What on earth is he doing?"

Amazement gave way to curiosity as Dick Hardy watched the

boy before him. Dudley Ralston it was, and he held an open slip of paper in one hand, and in the other a measuring line.

He first consulted the paper. Then he went to some rocks, measured from them to a clump of trees, from the trees toward the beach, drew a square on the smooth sand with a pointed stick, drove the stick into the sand, and muttered, audibly, to the astonished hearing of Dick Hardy:

"The box is there! I'll go back to the boat, get the shovel, and then, Mr. Dudley Richard Hardy Ralston, the Graham fortune is yours!"

"The Graham fortune!" ejaculated Dick, as he sprang out upon the sand the minute Dudley Ralston had disappeared from view. "Hello! here's the paper he was looking at. A diagram, and 'money box hidden as directed—Lionel Graham.' Something is hidden here, maybe some of the money Ralston is trying to get dishonestly. He's gone for a shovel. Have I time to dig? I'll try it!"

Chip, chip—clink! The sand flew in all directions, and then the piece of stick struck something a foot down.

With his hands, Dick removed the yielding sand. A lacquered covered box showed; he uncovered it fully, and drew it up. Its loose lid flew open.

"Bank notes!" exclaimed Dick, amazed at the immense value a single glance showed the box to contain. "I don't understand it all, but I'll take no risks on Dudley Ralston's honesty."

He hurriedly emptied the box, and carried the packages of bills to the shrubbery whence he had watched Dudley. He placed them on the ground. Then he returned to the sand, replaced the box, pushed the sand over it, trampled it down well, restored the lines Dudley had made, and drove the stick as he had found it.

The box cover had shut readily enough, now that its bursting contents were removed.

"Now to watch and follow him," murmured the excited Dick, hastening again to the shrubbery, and forgetting all about Abner Mull, the Marshalls, and the steamer. "Here he comes, and a shovel over his shoulder. He said he had a boat——"

Dudley Ralston returned to the spot, evidently attributing the disturbance of the ground to his own footsteps.

He began to dig, and uttered a wild cry of delight as the spade unearthed the lacquered box.

"It's mine! I've got it!" Dick heard him say. "My, but it's light; but bank notes are always light. Dudley Ralston, you're a Croesus—a millionaire! I'll open it!"

About to force the cover of the box, Dudley Ralston decided to hasten to his boat with it, instead.

A quick cry had warned him, and he fled like the wind.

That cry announced a new complication in the episodes of the hour. Dick Hardy, about to shadow Dudley's footsteps, uttered a sharp ejaculation of suspicion and pain, as a heavy blow was dealt him, and its force drove him, half stunned, to the ground.

"Just in time—ha, ha! I've got the cream of it all, and you two fellows——"

That was all Dick Hardy heard, ere his eyes closed, and his senses floated in a pained swoon.

He had caught sight of the speaker.

It was Abner Mull. His treacherous, castaway companion had, it seemed, witnessed the episode of the beach, and, prompted by the guidance of his covetous nature, had assailed Dick, and, gathering up the package of bank notes, had fled from the spot.

Dick Hardy came back to sensibility with a cry of dismay. The money was gone!

Glancing seaward, he saw a rowboat skimming the surface of the water; undoubtedly, its occupant was Dudley Ralston, escap-

ing to some near mainland, and felicitating himself that he had the Hardy fortune snug and safe in the black lacquered box.

Steaming away from the next island was the craft Dick had seen approaching it a short time previous. What did it mean? Was Judge Marshall leaving him to his fate?

His first impulse was to hasten to the next island, and reach, or signal, the departing steamer. Then a thought of the money deterred him. Mull had it. Treacherous, time-serving Abner Mull had come in for the final benefit of all his strivings. The thought maddened the indignant Dick.

He ran down the beach. He hurried his steps, as he gained the remote end of the island. There, just disposing of a package, evidently the bank notes, in his coat, was Abner Mull.

The possession of money had overcome his laziness. He was, apparently, about to swim to the islands to the southward, hoping thus to evade the pursuit of Dick Hardy.

"Stop, stop, Abner Mull!"

Abner Mull turned and seized a stout cudgel lying at his feet as Dick came running toward him. He struck at him, with a savage blow.

Dick, overcome with the fatigue of swimming, the excitement of the hour, and the previous blow Mull had awarded him, fell to a rock, too weak and stunned to resist.

"You leave me alone, I'll leave you alone!" cried Mull. "You follow me, and I'll just kill you," he muttered, fiercely. "I've got the money, and I intend to keep it! Oh, you will, will you?"

Dick Hardy had made a desperate effort to catch at Mull and overpower him. Mull had the advantage with the cudgel. A sudden thwack drove Dick to the ground a second time.

"You are a treacherous thief!" cried out Dick. "But you will never get to land with the money you have stolen!"

"Won't I? Ha, ha! I'd rather be Abner Mull than Dick Hardy just now. Ta, ta, Dicky; I'm off for a tour of the world!"

"Avast, there! What's this? Dan Knight and the pigeon-toed lubber, Hardy? Stand back, you young jackanapes, till I get the rights of this affair!"

A terribly gruff voice had spoken the words. Abner Mull recoiled in abject dismay. Dick Hardy looked up, with a cry of joy.

For the speaker was his nautical friend of the past, bluff, loyal Ben Arbuckle!

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

Little more remains to be told of Dick Hardy's fight for a fortune.

The lucky appearance of Ben Arbuckle, who had been washed ashore from the wreck, and had been wandering about on the island ever since, put an end to Mull's dreams of getting hold of the money.

The steamer which had been attracted by Judge Marshall's beacon lights picked up the Marshalls, as well as Ben, Mull, and Dick, and Dudley Ralston was, later on, picked up from his yawl.

So Dick at last met Lionel Graham, proved his identity by means of his tattoo mark, and is now a wealthy man.

Mull and Dudley were both given a chance to earn their living by him, and they have made a decided effort to lead straight lives and get along in the world.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 4, will contain "The Boy Balloonists; or, Among Weird Polar People." Walter Blackshaw, the hero of this new story, is a boy that you are bound to like. You know what a polar expedition in a balloon means—thrilling excitement, daring adventure, incidents of the strangest character. A runaway balloon is a terrible thing. Read about one in next week's issue, as well as about the peculiar race of people dwelling in the frozen North.

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